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HAMLET STUDIES

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Tenth Anniversary Volume

ERIC SAMS — Taboo, or Not Taboo? The Text, Dating and Authorship of *Hamlet*, 1589-1623

DAVID C.H. MORGAN — "When mercy seasons justice": How (and Why) Hamlet Does Not Kill Claudius

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Notes, Production Reports, and Reviews by

DAVID E. JONES, SHANTI PADHI, JOHN O'MEARA, LEE THORN, SARVAR KHAMBATTA, LYELL ASHER, W. ROHAN QUINCE, W. HUTCHINGS, HERBERT MAINUSCH, MYTHILI KAUL, R. F. FLEISSNER, R. A. FOAKES, URMILLA KHANNA

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Address all correspondence to:

R.W. Desai,
"Rangoon Villa,"
1/10 West Patel Nagar,
New Delhi 110 008, India

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Contributors to this Issue

LYELL ASHER is a Doctoral candidate in English at the University of Virginia working on a dissertation on Renaissance sonnet sequences. An essay of his entitled "Heidegger, Rorty, and the Possibility of Being" will appear in the collection *Ethics/Aesthetics: Postmodern Positions*, to be published in the Spring of 1988 by Maisonneuve Press.

ROBERT F. FLEISSNER teaches in the Department of English, Theatre and Communication at Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio. He received the first Talmadge McKinney Award for Research at Central State University. He is the author of *Dickens and Shakespeare* (1965; reprinted 1969); *Resolved to Love: The 1592 Edition of Henry Constable's "Diana" Critically Considered* (1980); and *The Prince and the Professor: The Wittenberg Connection in Marlowe, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Frost* (1986). His book-length manuscript "Ascending the Prufrockian Stair: Studies in a Dissociated Sensibility" will be published by Peter Lang Publishing in January 1989.

R.A. FOAKES is Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. His recent publications include *Illustrations of the English Stage 1642-1680* (1985), and an edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Cambridge Shakespeare (1984). He is well known for his writings on Shakespeare, and is at work on a book focussed on *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.

W. HUTCHINGS teaches at the University of Manchester and is the author of *The Poetry of William Cowper* (Croom Helm). His "A Review of Periodical Articles" is a regular feature of *HSt*. He is the British correspondent for the World Shakespeare Bibliography.

DAVID E. JONES is Professor of Theatre at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Author of *The Plays of T.S. Eliot* (1960) and numerous articles on Shakespeare including, most recently, a series of contributions to

Shakespeare Around the Globe: A Guide to Notable Postwar Revivals ed. Samuel Leiter (1986), he has directed at Universities in Great Britain and the U.S.A. over half the plays in the Shakespeare canon, several of them (including *Hamlet*) more than once.

MYTHILI KAUL, Professor of English at the University of Delhi, has published on Shakespeare in *N & Q, AN & Q*, *The Upstart Crow* and *HSt* ("Hamlet and Polonius"). Her most recent article "Shakespeare's Last Plays: The Relevance of Romance" has been published in *Yearly Review* (Dept. of English, University of Delhi), 2 (Dec. 1988).

SARVAR KHAMBATTA, Lecturer in English, St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad, did her doctoral research at Gujarat University on the literary works based on the Thomas Becket story. She has published on Christopher Fry, Robert Graves, Robert Bolt, and Arthur Miller in *Vidya* (Journal of Gujarat University), and on C.P. Snow in *Theology*.

URMILLA KHANNA, Professor of English at the University of Delhi, is the author of *The Tragic Hero in Shakespeare: The Dramatic Significance of His Isolation* (1974) and *King Lear: A Critical Introduction* (1978). Her note on Donne and Alchemy appeared in *N & Q* (Nov 1970) and a note entitled "The Use of Proverbial Phrases by Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*" appeared in *Yearly Review* (Dept. of English, University of Delhi), 2 (Dec. 1988). She is the President of The Shakespeare Society of India.

HERBERT MAINUSCH (Professor Dr.) is Director of the English Department, Munster University, West Germany. His recent publications are *Regie und Interpretation. Gespräche mit Regisseuren* (1985); *Dr. Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare*, trans. and Introd. (1987); and *Europäische Komödie*, ed. with an Introd. (in the press). He has published articles on Paul de Man, the theatre and its public, and the relationship between music and the other arts. He is currently working on a handbook on "Scepticism and Aesthetics" in cooperation with a Canadian and a Chinese scholar.

DAVID C.H. MORGAN is an English Honours graduate of Monash University, Australia. He has run his own import business, been a moderately successful poker player, and done a Field Linguistics course. He is attracted to mentally stimulating competitive games of all kinds (including literary criticism) and has a strong (if bemused) interest in literary theory, the current literary game. He is presently studying Linguistics while doing an M.A. at Monash. This is his first article.

JOHN O'MEARA specializes in Elizabethan and Shakespearean Tragedy. Born in Montreal, Canada, he received his Ph.D. in 1986 from The University of East Anglia, where he studied under Nicholas Brooke. The present article is his first to find publication. Another article, "Hamlet and the Fortunes of Sorrowful Imagination," will appear in *Cahiers Elizabêthans* in the Fall 1989 issue.

SHANTI PADHI teaches at Kamla Nehru College (University of Delhi). Her book on Bacon, *Serpent and Columbine,* was published by Orient Longman/ Kennikat. Her notes on Middleton, Ford, Jonson and Bacon have appeared in *N & Q* (April 1983 & June 1984) and on *Hamlet* in *HSt* (Vol.6). She is preparing an edition of *The Spanish Gipsie* (based on her Oxford thesis) for *The Revels Plays* series.

ARNOLD W. PREUSSNER, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Kansas, has published articles on Jonson, Chapman, and (forthcoming) Woody Allen. He is interested in generic interrelationships between comedy and tragedy and is working on a book-length study of Jacobean "city comedy" as a counter-genre to Shakespearean "festive" comedy.

W. ROHAN QUINCE's dissertation was entitled "Shakespeare in South Africa," a critical and cultural stage history. Apart from Shakespeare, his research interests include all drama in performance, as well as South African and other Post-Colonial literature. He has an article on "The 1983 English National Theatre Production of John Marston's *The Fawn*" forthcoming in the *Dibrugarh University Journal of English Studies*. He is currently Assistant Professor in American Thought and Language at Michigan State University.

JOSEPH J. ROMM works on defense, arms control, and military reform for a member of the House Armed Services Committee of the U.S. Congress. He has lectured widely about nuclear weaponry, and has written for many U.S. newspapers and magazines, as well as French and Canadian journals. Much of the research for this article was done at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington.

ERIC SAMS is best known as a writer on music (e.g. *The Songs of Hugo Wolf*, 1961, 2nd edition, 1983; *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, 1969, 2d edition, 1975; contributions to the *New Grove*, 1980). His career began with wartime service in the Intelligence Corps. and he has published solutions of several historical ciphers and shorthands. Since turning to Shakespeare studies in 1982 he has published articles in *TLS*, *N&Q*, and, most recently, in *Encounter* (June 1987 and Jan 1989) on a new approach to attribution, biography, and methodology, as well as the 400 - page book *Shakespeare's Lost Play Edmund Ironside*, 1985. A parallel edition of *Edward III* is in progress.

LEE THORN'S interests and publications are in poetry, playwriting, academic sociology, and art and theatrical criticism. Most recently the *Hemingway Review* has accepted his paper on *The Sun Also Rises* for publication in the Fall of 1988.

Notes and Comments

Tenth Anniversary Volume

"Words, words, words," says Hamlet to Polonius, perhaps wearily, when asked what he reads, and the ten volumes of *Hamlet Studies* (1979-1988) contain well over half-a-million words on the prince whose last words are "the rest is silence." In the Summer 1983 issue of *The Shakespeare Newsletter* Professor Marder raised several thought-provoking questions on the plethora of Shakespearean scholarship that engulfs us. While sharing his concern, we should at the same time recognise that this is so because Shakespeare belongs to everyone—social scientists, scientists, politicians, and many more. (Students of the Harvard Business School have to study the two parts of *Henry IV*.) Who possesses the authority to decide whether much of this writing is "positively scandalous" (Wayne C. Booth) or not ? All of us - readers. It is our responsibility to blame, or praise, and if we shirk this responsibility we are defaulters. A vital activity in the adventure of literary criticism lies in rejecting points of view with which one differs.

The Editorial Board of *Hamlet Studies* has tried to be catholic in its outlook; it has tried to give its readers a wide spectrum of critical approaches to the play with the hope that they, in turn, will express their reactions to these writings in the arena of the Forum Section of the journal. But with *Hamlet Studies* this has not happened. The Forum Section has over the past ten years attracted exactly four responses! What does this prove ? Perhaps that scholars are so busy working on their own books and articles that they have no time to spare for an activity unproductive of what would be deemed a "publication" by Departmental Committees assessing academic merit. This is unfortunate. Unless we develop in our discipline a rigorous questioning of what is published - the premises, the evidence, the methodology, the style, its intelligibility, the conclusions drawn, their validity - and make a public statement of our disagreement, if any, the mighty river of books and articles will flow on unheeded and unchecked. Instead of a blanket condemnation of this fecundity, much better would be a critical evaluation of such writing - what William Hutchings for example is doing in *Hamlet Studies* ("A Review of Periodical Articles") year after year.

One advantage that a highly specialised journal like *Hamlet Studies* enjoys over its fellows is that prospective readers know exactly what to expect even before they open the journal. *Shakespeare* journals have a range of plays and much else besides to cover; a reader interested in a specific play eagerly opens the latest issue, but is disappointed to find nothing on that particular play. Readers of *Hamlet Studies* have written in to say that they've finished reading the entire issue in one sitting and are vexed that it's not twice as long! For such addicts it's important that when "some necessary question of the play be then to be considered," all other activity cease. To such souls nothing written on *Hamlet* can be dismissed as "minutiae that will add up to very little" (Louis B. Wright). Anyone who ridicules the controversy over sullied/sallied/solid, bawds/bonds, or eale/evil as being literary pedantry would incur from them Hamlet's gibe at Polonius: "It shall to the barber's with your beard." A further advantage *Hamlet Studies* enjoys is that precisely because its focus is so narrow it can entertain divers points of view on a single question, it can afford to be hospitable to a wide spectrum of critical opinion ranging from the respectable to the maverick, from the well established to the way out - a generosity that other more general journals cannot extend because of the area they encompass being vast, and space necessarily limited.

But of course *Hamlet Studies* has not survived for ten years merely on account of its having provided an additional outlet for critical opinion. That a journal exclusively devoted to a single play should have lasted so long can only be because the play continues to probe our souls, exposing the deepest fears that oppress us, the cultural pessimism that afflicts us, perhaps without our full awareness of their exact nature or their dimensions. To mention only three of many possible examples : the irreparable destruction of our environment by economic "progress" having harnessed the power of science and technology that can neither be slowed down nor reversed; mindless political violence in the form of terrorism that can neither be analysed nor combated; and the insane stockpiling of nuclear weapons as the only realistic way in which to ensure the prevention of the holocaust and the continuance of our civilisation—all of these it can be argued, are latent concerns in *Hamlet* as perceived by us, not just intellectually but through the radical alteration of the very configuration of our consciousness, occasioned by the play's impact, thus developing a new Intentionality towards the world that surrounds us.

The issues Hamlet confronts are not limited to Claudius and his court. Hamlet himself in his most celebrated soliloquy, the opening lines of which are often invoked by those who have never read the play, carries the argument into waters far away from the mainland—"a sea of troubles," "the whips and scorns of time," "the oppressor's wrong," "the law's delay," "the insolence of office," "the dread of something after death" and of being "borne before an everlasting Judge" (Q1). The play, stripped of its externals (like the murder of Old Hamlet, the "o'er hasty marriage," the indirections of Polonius—to mention again just three elements) reveals inner layers of what might be construed as fundamental disturbances, or discords, that have universal validity. This is not to reduce the play to a simplistic formula but only to point out that the resonances it sets up in readers/viewers no longer governed by the beliefs of a period long since gone into history can be explained only in terms of forces beyond "the gross and scope of [rationalistic] opinon," that transcend the visible, the explicable:

> That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel
> Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,
> Making night hideous and we fools of nature
> So horridly to shake our disposition
> With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls ?
> Say why is this? Wherefore? What should we do ?

What *is* the Ghost for us ? Why do we endlessly debate its origins ? In an age that is overwhelmingly sceptical/atheistic/scientific, what secret fascination does it exercise over our souls ? "What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord . . . And there assume some other horrible form" ? is Horatio's fear for Hamlet. But the Ghost does no such thing. Though much maligned, "It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you," Hamlet declares. And yet, the doubts persist. Caught between the question of the Ghost's authenticity and the blandishments of Claudius's court, Hamlet's predicament is ours. To which voice shall we listen? To that of Emotion, or Reason ? Intuition, or Intellect ? Or to both ?

Hamlet is the thinking, feeling, individual of today combating a system, an organisation, too vast and impersonal to be comprehended. *Hamlet* had long before embodied the baffling void into which Kafka gazed, and Kafka recognised Shakespeare as his predecessor. "Max, I have seen a performance of *Hamlet*," he wrote in 1910 to Max Brod, "or rather heard Bassermann [Albert Bassermann 1867-1922]. For whole quarter-hours I actually had another person's face; every so often I had to look away from the stage into an empty box, in order to compose myself." Hamlet is pitted against an exploitative and self-aggrandising social and political order that has jettisoned all values of decorum, of propriety, of sincerity , that is the product of a secret act - unbeknownst to all except himself through the Ghost's revelation - that can never be established as truth by any objective evidence, but only by a Gestalt experiment which by its very nature can be interpreted by the viewer as a projection of his own demented fantasies: "Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel ?" No one knows better than Hamlet himself that his "trap" is but a mirror in which he gazes at his own reflection, history the nightmare from which, much later, Joyce's Stephen Dedalus tries to awake, "a man amazed at his own shadow cast gigantically on a mountain mist" (George Russell).

And yet, the Ghost *is* right; it *has* spoken the truth, and Hamlet, despite his doubts and questioning, knows in his soul ("Even with the very comment of thy soul," he tells Horatio) that there *is* absolute truth somewhere, some place. In our own time, when we learn that everything is relative, contingent, decentred, even the texts we study and teach being as evanescent as the Ghost ("'Tis here. 'Tis here, 'Tis gone"), don't we nevertheless believe, against logic, against reason, deep down in our bones that these texts do embody absolute truths that are unassailable and as invulnerable as the Ghost which, though air, mocks at our vain blows ? The double identity of the Ghost pulls us in two directions. Beyond paraphraseable meaning *Hamlet* embodies the paradox of our time, our situation. All literature may be a game, but it is a game that can shake us to the very foundation of our beings, that can make us feel the ache in our bones. "Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggets with 'em ? Mine ache to think on't."

The aim of *Hamlet Studies* has been to publish what we consider the best criticism, that is, what springs from a carefully considered and lively reading of the play. We take pride in having published many established scholars in the field, as well as several newcomers who have appeared in print for the first time in the pages of *Hamlet Studies*. It is also a matter of great satisfaction that older journals in Shakespeare studies, as well as in other fields, have applauded our performance over the last ten years: *Shakespeare Quarterly* (Autumn 1980), 462-64; *Shakespeare Survey*, 34, 171-2; *American Notes and Queries*, 22, nos. 5/6, 82; and *Bibliotheque d' humanisme et Renaissance*, 46, no.2, 460-61. We are grateful to them for their encouragement.

* * *

This volume of *Hamlet Studies* contains two essays that challenge prevalent opinion on the play. Eric Sams ("Taboo, or Not Taboo? The Text, Dating and Authorship of *Hamlet*, 1589-1623") argues that the successive texts of Hamlet- the Ur-Hamlet, Q1,Q2, and F1 - are all Shakespeare's own "stitching and unstitching" (Yeats) and not garbled versions of an original text now lost. David C.H. Morgan ("'When mercy seasons justice': How (and Why) Hamlet Does Not Kill Claudius"), examining closely the last encounter between Hamlet and Claudius after the death of Gertrude, links up Hamlet's *offering* the poisoned chalice to Claudius with I Corinthians 11: 28-31: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. . . . For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

And if Morgan sees Hamlet acknowledging the murderer's guilt that he shares with Claudius, Joseph J. Romm ("Why Hamlet Dies") carries the argument yet farther by showing that Hamlet gradually loses his identity as scholar, increasingly conforms with that displayed by the Ghost who is an implacable revenge-monger, and by play's end is as guilty as Claudius of "murder most foul." Sharply contrasting with this point of view is that of Arnold W. Preussner ("Waiting in *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*") who detects resemblances between the two plays: as Viola in the comic mode resigns herself to Time to untangle the knot, "not I," she admits (2.2.42), so does Hamlet in the tragic mode relinquish his attempts to control destiny, leaving it to divinity to shape the ends of events as they come.

* * *

Hamlet Studies is grateful to G.R. Taneja, abstracter for *Abstracts of English Studies*, for having prepared an exhaustive and analytical Index to Volumes 1-10 of *Hamlet Studies*. Price US $ 30 for institutions, US $ 14 for individuals (plus US $ 4 air mail registered postage).

R.W.D.

Taboo or Not Taboo ? The Text, Dating and Authorship of *Hamlet*, 1589-1623

ERIC SAMS

History records five *Hamlets*. The first, usually called the *Ur-Hamlet* (U for short), was mentioned in 1589. At that period English actors toured in Denmark, Holland and Germany. A debased and undatable *Tragoedia: Der Bestrafte Brudermord* (BB), i.e. Fratricide Punished, sub-titled *Prinz Hamlet aus Dannemark*, survives in a manuscript copy. The earliest printed *Hamlet* was the First (so-called 'Bad') Quarto (Q1) of 1603. Next came the Second Quarto (Q2) in late 1604 and early 1605, and finally the First Folio (F) in 1623. Each of these four extant versions differs widely from the others.

So does each of the five current editions, by Nigel Alexander,[1] the late T.J.B. Spencer[2] (with Anne Barton[3]), Harold Jenkins,[4] Philip Edwards,[5] and G.R. Hibbard.[6] No two of these texts have the same lineation; variant readings abound, by the hundred. The editors confidently contradict each other about everything, from the tiniest verbal detail to the total control-text used.

Thus students will learn that "there is only a remote possibility,"[3] or else a clear probability[4] or even a certainty[5,6] that Shakespeare had read the French source of his story. Again, U was in all probability,[3,4] or possibly[5] (though not necessarily[6]), written by Kyd, except that it could easily have been written by Shakespeare himself.[1] Further, U either was ("I am sure"[5]), or ("beyond all doubt") was not,[4] the source of Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*. Next, the 2200 lines of Q1, including some 300 otherwise unknown, were evolved from the defective memory of an actor who had played Marcellus and perhaps also Lucianus,[5] or Marcellus,and certainly also Lucianus and Voltemand.[4,6] This general hypothesis (as its deviser, G.I. Duthie,[7] called it in 1941) was "conclusively demonstrated"[4] or "shown beyond reasonable doubt"[6] by G.I. Duthie in 1941. This doctrine of "memorial reconstruction" is demonstrable by detailed conparison between Q1 1603 and the supposedly pre-existing and available,[4,6] or non-existent and unavailable,[5] authentic texts of Q2 1604-5 and F 1623, or rather the text "represented by"[4] or "behind"[6] F, or some other unknown text hybrid between Q2 and F.[5] Duthie's approach and methods may either be extolled and exemplified for several pages,[4,6] or left entirely unmentioned,[1,2] or even replaced by an utterly different and incompatible theory.[5] The prime purpose of Q1 either was,[1,5] or was not,[4,6] to provide copy for a printer. Its c.300 otherwise unknown lines may well,[2,3] or cannot possibly,[4,5,6] contain lines by Shakespeare. Its source is completely unclear,[1] or else entirely clear,[2,4,5,6] namely, either "a version significantly different from that which we know today"[2] (incorporating "material which seems to come from . . . an older tragedy"[3]) or else a version not all that different from those we know today, namely F,[4,6] or Q2,[7] or a hybrid between the two,[5] none of which incorporates any material from any older tragedy.

But at least all authorities agree that there must have been different stages in the play's evolution, including a possible "revision by Shakespeare"[5]? Not a bit of it; "all those theories which view Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as progressing to its final shape via one or more rewriting . . . are quite without evidence or plausibility."[4] The *Hamlet* we know was,[4] or was not,[5] complete in all essentials by 1600. The bibliographical evidence proves that a theory of collusion between two publishers either "accords best with the incontrovertible facts"[6] or is just a "baseless supposition."[4] For their control-text, modern scholarly editors must logically prefer F to Q2,[6] or Q2 to F,[4] which, for historical reasons, cannot be[4] (though it may be[1]) later than 1604, and must also be earlier[6] or later[5] than 1606. Its copyist was either an irresponsibly careless transcriber, who "did untold damage,"[5] or else William Shakespeare revising his masterpiece for publication.[6] And so on, and on for page after page, as edition piles on edition.

The root cause of all this rot in the state of *Hamlet* studies is ineradicable academic preconviction. Two topics in particular have become taboo. First, Shakespeare (1564-1616) could not conceivably have written U 1589. Secondly, Q1 1603 could not conceivably have derived from his own manuscript. He just *cannot* have started *so early;* he just *cannot* have written *like that*. These baseless accusations are never nowadays brought to trial, or they would be laughed out of court by the simple question "why not ?" Their logical interlinkage is also overlooked. Once admit the late developer's early start, and his unfamiliar early style soon follows; and conversely. Yet the double taboo has remained unbroken for decades. The only *Hamlet* editor[1] who sees that U could easily be a Shakespeare play (why not ?) misses the selfevident inference that so, therefore, could Q1. The only *Hamlet* editor[2] who sees that unfamiliar passages in Q1 could easily have been written by Shakespeare (why not ?) remains blind to the plain possibility that these derive from U.

Obscured by such blinkers, U has stayed out of sight, and mind. Editors now claim total ignorance of it, because it is lost. At the same time they freely attribute it to Thomas Kyd (1558-1594) or some forgotten contemporary. Such a stance is unsteady. Whether the U text is in fact lost, or survives within some later version, is a vital issue which ought not to be thus blocked by question-begging assumptions. All roads should remain open to an objective and systematic approach by way of documented facts in date order. The following annotated catalogue aims to record all the available information relevant to the date, source, genre, text and performance of any *Hamlet* play from 1589 to 1623. The data cited derive from extant verifiable documents.

1514: *Danorum regum heroumque historiae* by the 12th century chronicler Saxo Grammaticus tells the story of Amlodhi (latinised as Amlethus) whose father the king is killed by his own brother Feng, who then weds the king's widow Geruth. Amlodhi resolves on revenge. He is supported by a loyal foster-brother. He feigns madness, which is tested by observing his reactions to a woman. He is questioned by courtiers, and speaks in riddles. He kills an eavesdropper and treats the corpse with contempt. He reproaches his mother, who encourages his vengeance. He is sent to England with two companions and his own death-warrant, in which he substitutes their names. He arrives home during a funeral. After an exchange of swords he kills his uncle and becomes king. His further adventures are recounted.

1570: *Histoires tragiques* by Francois de Belleforest. Its fifth volume contains a paraphrased and embellished version of the Saxo story. The hero's name is Amleth.

1571, 1578: reports on the 1554 lawsuit Hales vs. Pettit about suicide by drowning, parodied in *Hamlet* 5.1.

1579: Katherine Hamlett was drowned in the Avon.

1580: the Stratford-on-Avon archives record an inquest on Katherine *Hamlett*, drowned in the Avon. Verdict — misadventure.

1581: *Ten Tragedies* of Seneca, including *Thyestes*, in English translation.

1582: according to Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, Shakespeare came to London and "began early to make essays at Dramatique Poetry, which at that time was very lowe; and his Playes tooke well."

1585: Shakespeare's only son (d. 1596) is christened after his Stratford friend Hamlet Sadler.

1586: English actors in Denmark.

1588: death of Richard Tarleton, chief comedian of the Queen's Men.

1589: many English lives are lost in an invasion of Portugal. By 1589: three Senecan revenge tragedies: *Hamlet* (U), Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*[8] (indebted to Thyestes and the *Histoires Tragiques*)[9]

1589: *Menaphon*, a novella by Robert Greene (1558-1592) has a satirical preface by his protege Thomas Nashe (1567-1601). Relevant excerpts: "I'le . . . talke a little in friendship with a few of our triuiall translators. It is a comon practice now a daies amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through euery arte and thrive by none, to leaue the trade of *Noverint*[10] whereto they were borne, and to busie themselues with the indevors of Art, that could scarcelie latinise their neck-verse[11] if they should haue neede; yet English Seneca read by candle light yeeldes manie good sentences, as *Bloud is a begger*, and so foorth; and if you intreat him fair in a frostie morning, he will afford you whole *Hamlets*. I should say handfulls of tragical speaches. But o greife ! *tempus edax rerum*, what's that will last alwaies ? The sea exhaled by droppes will in continuance be drie, and *Seneca* let bloud line by line and page by page, at length must needes die to our stage: which makes his famisht followers to imitate the Kidde in Aesop, who enamored with the Foxes newfangles, forsooke all hopes of life to leape into a new occupation; and these men renouncing all possibilities of credit or estimation, to intermeddle with Italian translations . . . their twopenie pamphlets . . . their home-born mediocritie . . . Sufficeth them to bodge up a blank verse with ifs and ands . . . and spend two or three howers turning over French *Doudie* . . . ."[12]

1590-1591: English actors in Holland and Germany.[8]

1592: A Groatsworth of Wit . . . by Robert Greene, complains about "an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute *Iohannes factotum*, is in his own conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey . . . such rude groome . . . these buckram[13] gentlemen . . . peasants . . . ."

1592: *Kind Heart's Dream* by Henry Chettle (?1560-?1607) prefaces his remarks on the Greene-Shakespeare controversy by a reference to "two very sufficient translators."

1593: The Earl of Pembroke's theatre company disbands, bankrupt.

1594: *Titus andronicus* and *The taming of A Shrew* published; both had been acted by the Earl of Pembroke's company.

1594: *Titus Andronicus* and *The Taming of A Shrew* and *Hamlet*[14] "performed at Newington Butts by the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

1594: Shakespeare first recorded as a Lord Chamberlain's Man.

1594 or 1595: The Lord Chamberlain's men perform in Cambridge[15]; a payment of xl.s is recorded in treasurers' accounts for the year ending Michaelmas 1595.

1594: *A Looking-Glass for London and England,* by Thomas Lodge (1558-1625) and Robert Greene: "Alas, sir, your father, why sir methinks I see the gentleman still . . . his beard rat's colour, half black half white."[16]

1594: *Wit's Miserie* by Thomas Lodge describes a devil that looked "as pale as the vizard of the ghost who cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster-wife, *Hamlet, revenge* !"

1596: death of Hamlet Shakespeare, aged eleven in Stratford-upon-Avon. See footnote 23 below.

1598: Speght's edition of Chaucer. Gabriel Harvey wrote that date at the beginning and end of his own copy, which also contains (fol.394v) his note "And now translated Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso & Bartas himself deserue curious comparison with Chaucer, Lidgate, & owre best English, auncient and moderne. Amongst which, the Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia & the Faerie Queene ar now freshest in request: & Astrophil & Amyntas ar none of the idlest pastimes of sum fine humanists. The Earle of Essex[17] much commends Albion's England . . . and the Lord Mountjoy makes the like account of Daniels peece of the Chronicle, touching the Usurpation of Henrie of Bullingbrooke . . . The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeare's Venus, & Adonis but his Lucrece, & his tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, haue it in them to please the wiser sort. Or such poets: or better: or none.

> Villa miretur vulgus: mihi flavus Apollo
> Pocula Castaliase plena ministret aquae:

quote Sir Edward Dier, betwene iest & earnest. Whose written deuises far excell most of the sonets, and cantos in print. His Amaryllis, & Sir Walter Raleighs Cynthia, how fine & sweet inuentions ? Excellent matter of emulation for Spencer, Constable, France, Watson,[18] Daniel, Warner, Chapman, Siluester, Shakespeare, & the rest of owr florishing metricians.

looke for much, as well in verse, as in prose, from mie two Oxford frends, Doctor Gager, & M. Hackluit: both rarely furnished for the purpose: & sumtime as weightie as briefe: & amongst so manie gentle, noble, & royall spirits meethinkes I see sum heroical thing in the clowdes: mie soueraine hope. Axiophilus shall forgett himself, or will remember to leave sum memorials behinde him: & to make an vse of so many rhapsodies, cantos, hymnes, odes, epigrams, sonets, & discourses, as at idle howers, or at flowing fitts he hath compiled. God knowes what is good for the world, & fitting for this age."

1598: *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury* by Francis Meres: "As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines; so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the Stage; for . . . Tragedy (witnes) his . . . *Titus andronicus*." *Hamlet* is not mentioned.

1601: *Antonio's Revenge*, by John Marston, derives from a *Hamlet* play.

1601: *Satiromastix* by Thomas Dekker: "My name's Hamlet, revenge; thou hast been at Paris Garden,[19] hast not ?"

1602: On 26 July, James Roberts "Entred for his copie under the handes of master Pasfield and master Waterson warden A booke called the Revenge of Hamlett Prince Denmark as yt was latelie Acted by the Lord Chamberleyne his servantes."

1603: After 19 May: Q1 "*The Tragical Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke*. By William Shakespeare. As it hath beene diverse times acted by his Highnesse servantes[20] in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere. At London printed for N [icholas] L [ing] and John Trundell. 1603." Its running title is "The tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark." Its c.2200 lines include some 300 otherwise unknown, with a dialogue between the Queen and Horatio. Among many other differences of nomenclature, Polonius is called 'Corambis' and his servant Reynaldo 'Montano'. Details of character and plot are also variant; thus Hamlet is unequivocally young, the Queen encourages his vengeance, and the nunnery scene precedes the arrival of the players.

1604 Q2 "*The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.* By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie. At London, Printed by I [ames] R [oberts] for N [icholas] L [ing] and are to be sold at his shoppe under Saint Dunstons Church in Fleetstreet. 1604."[21] This much longer version, c.3700 lines, is recognisably the world-famous masterpiece. It shared the copyright established by Ling's publication of Q1.

1607: *Hamlet, The Taming of A Shrew, Romeo and Juliet, Love's Labours Lost* and twelve other books transferred from Nicholas Ling to John Smethwick.

1608: *A Nest of Ninnies* by Robert Arnim: "There are, as Hamlet says,[22] things called whips in store."

1611, 1622: Q3 and Q4, printed for John Smethwick from Q2, with amendments.

1616: Shakespeare's will includes bequests of money, for the purchase of memorial rings, to "Hamlett Sadler" and "my fellows John Hemynges and Henry Cundell."

1623: Hemings and Condell bring out the First Folio of collected plays, including F, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*: this text has some 80 lines not found in Q2, which has some 230 lines not found in F.

1623: Ben Jonson, in the First Folio, "To the memory of my beloved, the author Master William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us . . . - thou hadst small Latin and less Greek . . . yet must I not give Nature all" "he who casts to write a living line must sweat and strike the second heat/upon the Muses' anvil ."

c. 1626: Ben Jonson, in *Timber, or Discoveries* (1641) "he flow'd with that facility that sometime it was necessary he should be stopped."

unknown date: BB, the German prose text *Der Bestrafte Brudermord.*

> It has a rhymed Senecan prologue spoken by Night and the Furies. Its Hamlet says "Ja, ja, Konig, schickt mich nach Portugal, auf dass ich nimmer wieder komme" (Yes, yes King, send me to Portugal, so that I'll never come back again). It incorporates crudely farcical elements otherwise unknown. As in Q1, Polonius is 'Corambus'; the nunnery scene precedes the arrival of the players; and so on.

The foregoing facts offer self-evident inferences. Shakespeare had written U by 1589; it was acted in Germany and eventually debased to BB; meanwhile, successive English versions were published as Q1 1603, Q2 1604-5, and F 1623. All the relevant data click cleanly into that simple sequence.

But in modern editorial chronology, Q2 1604-5 came first (acted. c.1600), closely followed by F 1623, all well before Q1 1603. Neither U nor the unfamiliar text of Q1 had anything to do with Shakespeare. To achieve these remarkable results, all the actual historical evidence of date and authorship has to be ignored or denied. Thus the admittedly possible date of 1598 for Harvey's mention of *Hamlet* cannot be allowed to mean 1598; the publication announced in 1602 cannot be allowed to mean Q1 1603; the latter's title-page assurances about Shakespeare's authorship and his company's performances cannot be allowed to mean either him or his company; and so on. All such contemporary fact may safely be discarded in favour of modern theories; or so editors instinctively suppose. But what if those theories are all just wrong, as in view of their contradictions many of them must be ? Then the whole tragical history of twentieth century *Hamlet* criticism will have to be rewritten. All five editions under review evade the vital questions (which should have been considered in strict sequence) by arguing backwards in logic from conclusion to premises and in time from F 1623 via Q1 1603 to U 1589. We should, instead, start again from the sources, with a fresh approach. Then the first problem becomes: who wrote U ?

For 400 years, the legendary Amlodh lay latinised as Amlethus. For another twenty years, he was also gallicised as Amleth. Then suddenly, in 1589, he steps on to the world stage as the hero Hamlet, in the first recorded mention of that form of his name. It was no mere Englishing; he could readily have been called Amleth here too. He had been deliberately rebaptised by his new creator. The alteration was quite elaborate; the initial vowel was aspirated and the soft final consonant hardened. The author of U must have chosen that changed name, for some good reason.

One editor (only)[4] sees that the "remarkably named" Katherine Hamlett, drowned in the Avon near Stratford in 1579, "may be more than coincidence." All non-editors will see that this is the wrong way round. It is the unheard-of fictional non-Danish non-Christian name Hamlet, not the real-life English surname, that is truly remarkable, though never remarked. Of course that Stratford name is more than coincidence. It had been bestowed in baptism, first on Shakespeare's best Stratford friend, c.1564, and then on his own son Hamlet[23] in 1585.

It would have seemed an apt title for a 1589 Shakespeare play which begins with a father, a son and a best friend, and goes on to describe a woman's death by drowning, an inquest, and a debate about burial in consecrated ground. In the Stratford inquest, held in February 1580, the jury found accidental death, *per infortunium;* the deceased Katherine Hamlett slipped and fell into the river, and was drowned, and met her death in no other wise or fashion, *et non aliter nec alio modo ad mortem suam devenit.*

But the real coincidence is surely that this Christian name, otherwise unrecorded in any archive ever researched, yet familiar in every sense among Tudor Stratfordians, happened to be an anagram of the French equivalent for the Latin form of the non-Christian name of a legendary pagan prince of Denmark.

Only Shakespeare among known dramatists had any known links with the name Hamlet; and his could hardly have been more intimate or intense. The name was specially chosen by the author of U. But this has now become a typical taboo. Modern authorities assume that Shakespeare could not have written the early *Hamlet*, so its newly-bestowed title must be set aside or explained away. The only editor[4] who notices it fails to see its clear significance. No one even hints that it was the name of Shakespeare's only son, and his own best friend as well as that best friend's drowned namesake, presumably a kinswoman, whose affinity with Ophelia may "admittedly be more than a coincidence."[4]

In a more robust age of scholarship the archivist Edgar I. Fripp[24] could write: "The story of Ophelia, we can hardly doubt, was fashioned out of the poet's youthful recollection" of this accident and inquest, with the further inference that the fifteen-year-old Shakespeare was probably then working as a lawyer's clerk in Stratford. According to Nashe, the author of U was born to the trade of *noverint*, i.e. a lawyer's clerk. His identity is separately inferable from the copious evidence of feuding among dramatists c.1590. One editor[4] notices that "the tone in which Nashe and Lodge write of the *Ur-Hamlet* suggests that they both found it rather ridiculous." They were both university wits, like their crony and collaborator Robert Greene. What he found rather ridiculous was the pretentious dramatic style of the upstart uneducated countryman Shakespeare, who had attended only the local grammar school, if that. It is already plain from the excerpts cited above, and plainer still from all such sources in their entirety, that Greene and Nashe are shooting the same shafts from the same shoulder-to-shoulder standpoint, *de haut en bas*. They are thus defending the same lofty citadel against the same lowly besiegers. Nashe in 1589 jeers at Kyd and his sort, Greene in 1592 at Shakespeare and his. But Kyd and Shakespeare were the only notable non-University playwrights of the period. Their identity as the only two targets can also be inferred from Nashe's description of them as "translators," in conjunction with Chettle's mention of "two translators." Nashe must have rendered them recognisable to his readers, or his shafts would lack all point. He offers two clues which have remained clear for 400 years. He quibbles on "handfuls" and "*Hamlets*"; fifty words later, in a changed context, he puns on "Kidde" and "Kyd." It would be senseless to point twice at one of a pair and ignore the other. So, since "Kidde" means Kyd, "Hamlet" cannot. So *Hamlet* means Shakespeare.

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That last point carries its own quota of independent weight. The universally adopted term *Ur-Hamlet* is formed by analogy with an early version of *Faust* known as the *Ur-Faust*. It would take more than a quibble and a pun to persuade German readers that the *Ur-Faust* was written by anyone but Goethe, as common sense also insists. On the same ground, which Tudor playwright is most likely to have written an early *Hamlet* play? Or, to put the same point more simply, who wrote *Hamlet* ?

Here the editorial earthworks become dauntingly massive. The taboo has been working underground, and overtime, for decades. As the first line of defence, Kyd can be pushed forward as a "probability."[4] This involves the astounding assumption that Nashe's "these men" must mean one man only; twenty plain plurals have to be given that singular interpretation, just for the sake of a Kyd hypothesis. Even the majority[1,2,5,6] who see Kyd's *Hamlet* as a mare's nest on a wild goose chase feel forbidden to look any further. The taboo has set up a roadblock. Editors automatically stop at "Kyd or one of his fellow-dramatists" instead of taking the necessary next step - if not Kyd, who ?

Before U's next appearance, the scene had changed. Greene died in 1592, Kyd in 1594. Meanwhile, the plague had closed the London theatres, delayed the performance and printing of plays, and forced the theatre companies into retirement or regrouping. Now, for the first time, we hear of "the emerging company of the Lord Chamberlain's men, Shakespeare's company." They performed *Hamlet* at Newington Butts in 1594, and again at their own Shoreditch playhouse, The Theatre, by 1596. This *Hamlet* was surely U. All our editors agree, serenely untroubled by the curious coincidence that the young Shakespeare and the earliest *Hamlet* emerge from obscurity together, side by side, in the same year, and with the same company. With them came *Titus Andronicus* and *The Taming of A Shrew*, both acted by the Earl of Pembroke's Men, who had disbanded in 1593. Shakespeare is often colourably claimed to have belonged to that company, as dramatist and actor. On any assessment, the manifest inference is that when he joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594 he brought his own early plays with him, such as *Titus*, *A Shrew* and *Hamlet*, all written c.1589.

These trails lead deep into forbidden territory. Yet the editors themselves step over the line. It was indeed "probably to Shakespeare's own company"[4] that U belonged; "he cannot have been unfamiliar with it."[4] Further, "it looks as though the Lord Chamberlain's Men took it with them to The Theatre."[6] So Shakespeare took it with him to his own playhouse. He would have acted in it, too; that was also his metier. There was a strong tradition that he played the Ghost. If so, his appeal struck home: "remember me." No Tudor role was better remembered. The frosty morning, the tragical speeches, the pale vizard, the black and white beard, the wailful cry of "Hamlet, revenge,"[25] all seem to have stayed photographically imprinted from the flash of memorable performance. That, surely, was where the tradition began. Rowe's[26] informants were unanimous. "Tho' I have inquir'd, I could never meet with any further account of him than that the top of his own performance was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*." By 1709, all that remained of Shakespeare on the stage was his own Ghost. But the only recorded appearances of that Ghost come from U, which was therefore his own *Hamlet*. The allusions of his detractors Nashe and Greene, and the latter's collaborator Lodge, would thus be in every sense personal. The indentification of role with player, and hence authorship, is further corroborated by Shakespeare's own documented acting career, which began in 1594 and is not recorded after 1606, thus conforming closely with the documented performances and recollections of U.

Further, the author of U had conjured up that Ghost in the first place. It makes no appearance in Saxo or Belleforest. Its source is surely English Seneca, just as Nashe says; and that too implies a personal allusion. "English Seneca" had been heard making tragical speeches just like the Ghost in *Hamlet* when entreated fair on a frosty morning; that would be a telling jibe at an actor-playwright famed for his Ghost role who would later be described by Francis Meres as the English equivalent of Seneca. His Ghost still steps straight out of *Thyestes*, apparently unnoticed. Its curious complaints about fasting, fires and a prison house, as well as its foreshadowings of revenge, demonstrate its direct descent from the ghost of Tantalus: "snatching with famished mouth at vanishing food," ". . . let me return to . . . my prison house . . . let me stand in a stream of fire."[27] The author of U 1589 thus drew on Seneca (*Thyestes)* as well as on Belleforest (*Histoires Tragiques)*. The only Tudor playwright ever deemed to have drawn on both *Thyestes* and the *Histoires Tragiques* was Shakespeare, in *Titus Andronicus* c.1589, which was performed with U 1589 by his own company, in 1594.

One modern editor[6] reasons that Shakespeare also borrowed from Belleforest the unusual description of the play on the title-pages of both the First and Second Quarto as a "Tragical History." But what else would the author of the Belleforest-based U have called *his* play, on its own manuscript title-page ? He, and he alone, must have used that source; he alone can be credited with any such entitlement. If he wrote the unusual and indeed otherwise unheard of description "The Tragical History of *Hamlet*" at the head of his own fair copy, then *prima facie* he was Shakespeare, who alone is known to have used that title and indeed glanced at it in his own text, as tragical-historical.(2.2.398). Similarly, only Shakespeare is known to have used the equally idiosyncratic phrase "things called whips"[28] which Armin quoted from U.[21]

We have now reached the stage where a shadowy Doppelganger is detected dodging around Shakespeare at a time when both are busily engaged in writing and revising the same play, for the same company, with the same unusual phrase and the same title from the same sources, and then, as an encore, playing the same part in it, at the same theatre. The editors now need special emergency measures to keep good Jekyll and bad Hyde safely apart. They have to be surgically separated by such saws as "the pre-Shakespearean play,"[4] "the Elizabethan *Hamlet* that preceded Shakespeare's,"[5] and so forth. But these two insist on coalescing as well as collaborating. It was the author of U who undertook all the hard Belleforest spadework. By 1589, that barren narrative had been cultivated into a popular stage play. But who reaped the benefit ? Thoughtful editors, after deep research, infer that Shakespeare must have mercilessly exploited this "well-known earlier play of unknown authorship"[5] to make his own supreme masterpiece. He "rewrote" it; he "reworked" it; he "used" it; he "took what he wanted" from it; he "annexed from it whatever he found useful in it"[6]; and thus he "transformed"[3,4,6] it. Or, in plain English, he stole it.

We learn from Harold Jenkins, who has made a special study of these depredations, that U already contained the essentials of Shakespeare's plot and his leading episodes, namely adultery, fratricide, an incestuous marriage, the ghost of a murdered father, feigned madness, the ultimate achievement of a long-delayed revenge, the encounter with a fair lady, the Queen denounced in a big scene in her chamber, Hamlet's voyage for England and the death of his two escorts, his return, a funeral, the exchange of swords, the killing of the King, the roles of Ophelia, Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Horatio, the combat with old Fortinbras, the drift of the dialogue between Hamlet and his mother, his contempt for the corpse of Polonius, his "fouled stockings," and Claudius's fear of Gertrude's displeasure as a reason for not proceeding against Hamlet. Again, U may also have contained, whether explicitly or as the germ of an idea, the loss of lands, their recovery by the young Fortinbras, Ophelia's love of Hamlet from childhood on, her selfless devotion, the functions of the Ghost (telling of murder and betrayal, demanding vengeance, reappearing in the Queen's chamber), together with such phrases as "hoodman-blind," "I lack advancement," "scourge and minister" of Heaven, and such conjunctions as devil, melancholy and abuse, or conscience and enterprise. Indeed, all that Shakespeare inherited from Belleforest may well have come to him via U, including the love interest, the contrast between the dead and the living brother, the Ghost's appearance at the beginning of the play, its promotion from a Senecan prologue of chorus to an active participant, the hero's death as he achieves his revenge, and the sub-plot which makes the man that Hamlet kills the father of a son who will avenge him as well as of the woman who loves Hamlet. If, as Harold Jenkins believes, Kyd wrote U, then by further inference U also contained or suggested the background of war and politics, with ambassadorial visits, Hamlet's distrust of the Ghost, his self-accusation of preferring words to blood, his thought of suicide, the seemingly innocent play within a play, the public reconciliation of the avenging Hamlet with his destined victim, Laertes, a heroine whose love is opposed by her father and her brother, and a woman who goes mad and kills herself, among various other ideas all elaborated in *The Spanish Tragedy.* But these points would remain equally valid whoever wrote U, which might well have contained them just as it might also (as Jenkins further concedes) have had a grave-digger, pirates, the mad visit to Ophelia's closet, the villain spared at prayer, and so forth.

Nor is the U cornucopia thereby exhausted. It continues to shower Shakespeare with immortal ideas, amid the applause of all his editors. Cambridge adds yet more possibilities, such as the device of a secret murder which needs a ghost to disclose it, and the shift of the entire setting from pagan times to a Christian Renaissance court. Among Oxford's contributions are the hero's melancholy cast of mind, his delays, his sea voyages, the characters of Laertes and Osric, and the topical interest in Danish affairs, as well as the title "Tragical History." Oxford also identifies certain notions as peculiar to Shakespeare himself, namely, "matter that appears to spring out of immediate personal experience - a company of players arriving in a town or at a court, squabbles among the London Theatres, legal quibble about the definition of suicide, and a grave-digger plying his trade," supplemented by direct access to Italian[29] historical documents about the Duke of Urbano's murder in 1538, and a Canterbury lawsuit of 1560 about the suicide by drowning of Sir James Hales. If those episodes and allusions indeed sprang from Shakespeare's personal experience, and their possible presence in U is admitted, then his possible authorship of U is also admitted. And that actual conclusion is surely inferable *per se* from the profound and unplumbable depths of his indebtedness to U, about which the whole theatre world must have known for generations, without the faintest recorded whisper of complaint or even comment from any quarter. Either Shakespeare was a great playwright who wrote U, or he was a gross plagiarist who shamelessly abused it.

We left him and his company acting it in the 1590s. In the June 1592 season it was presented together with *Titus* and *A Shrew*. Those two were both published in 1594. Only one copy of each survives. If *Hamlet* was released for publication at the same time, no trace of it now remains except perhaps in Gabriel Harvey's marginal note about "Shakespeare's tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark." In its context this appears to refer to a work that could be read along with *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* published in 1593 and 1594 respectively. Such a time-bomb may still be ticking away somewhere. No wonder Harvey's words are tiptoed around so gingerly. No editor confesses the plain truth; here is a Shakespeare *Hamlet* lurking in history long before modern theory allows it any right to exist. Harvey's evidence is therefore vital. Here is one way of dealing with it: "The sense of time is so confused in Harvey's note that it is really of little use in trying to date *Hamlet*."[5] It is certainly of no use at all in trying to date *Hamlet* c.1600; but that hardly justifies accusing a Tudor writer of confusion about his own time. The Harvey editor Moore Smith[30] concluded that whenever the note was written, "Shakespere's *Hamlet* was already well known"; and there is no objective reason to doubt that Harvey was writing in or about 1598, as F.S. Boas[31] also decided after a close examination of the evidence.

One and only one *Hamlet* was well known in 1598, namely U, as performed between 1589 and 1601. But the taboo tells editors otherwise. Harvey must have meant their *Hamlet*, not this. We have to suppose that the work he gravely commends as comparable with *The Rape of Lucrece* for its potential ability to "please the wiser sort" must have been some version of F 1623, which editors date mid-1601. So here, "perplexity begins," as Harold Jenkins puts it; Harvey's note is "not reconcilable" with this date, because it refers in the present tense to the Earl of Essex, who was executed on 25 February 1601. Typically, the historical document, not the literary theory, is blamed for this contretemps; the vital task is to reconcile Gabriel Harvey with Harold Jenkins, not conversely.

This is partly achieved by the silent assumption that Harvey must have waited until 1600 or so before writing in the book he bought in 1598. The other terminus is duly adjusted by postulating that F's undisputed allusion to theatrical events of mid-1601 must have been "grafted on"[4] to the play as supposedly written and performed c.1600, and duly seen and praised by Harvey then, as the theory requires. For this purpose the admitted fact that Harvey "seems to refer to a work that could be read" is also set aside. Oxford agrees: "there is a difficulty for some" in dating F before February 1601, which can be explained by assuming that the theatrical allusions were "a later addition."

But there are no rational grounds whatever for feigning that Harvey was either writing later than 1598 or referring to any version of Q2 1604-5 or F 1623 and hence no reason to date either before mid-1601 at the earliest. On the contrary, the plain historical evidence for that actual date is freely acknowledged.[4,5,6] A theory that insists on redating documents, denying title page evidence and disintegrating Shakespeare plays, just for its own convenience, stands self-condemned. Its removal allows the facts to speak for themselves without editorial interference; and they tell us about a Shakespeare *Hamlet* well known to Harvey c.1598, and hence neither Q2 nor F and therefore either Q1 ('by William Shakespeare') or U. Harvey would have good reason to know who wrote it; he was intimately involved in the feud between his hated enemies Greene and Nashe and their enemy Shakespeare, whose work he was thus disposed to praise and support.

The only actual argument against a Shakespearean U is the absence of any *Hamlet* among the Shakespeare plays mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598. But Meres was not compiling a worklist. His rhetorical style required him to balance six examples of excellence in comedy against six in tragedy (including history). Meres makes no reference to any *Henry VI* history either, although a Shakespeare play on that reign was famously familiar to Greene in 1592. Further, there is no evidence [32] that Meres came to London before 1597, when there is a gap in the records of *Hamlet* performances. Perhaps they had stopped for a time, when Hamlet Shakespeare died in 1596, just eleven years old.

This Meres omission is massively outweighed by the copious positive evidence of title, name, topical controversy, genre, company, theatre and role, all within the same coherent sequence of sightings and citings in 1589, 1594 and 1601, and supported by Shakespeare's demonstrably detailed indebtedness to U, as well as by ordinary common sense. Into this same sequence the Harvey reference c.1598 fits without strain or overlap. Either this well-known Chamberlain's revenge play and its surely well-known Chamberlain's author both mysteriously vanished in 1600, to be replaced by Shakespeare's shameless piracy of a close colleague, or else the same revenge series continues unbroken into the pastiche *Antonio's Revenge* and the quotation "Hamlet, revenge," both 1601, and thence into the "*Revenge of Hamlet*" announced for publication in 1602, and duly published as Q1 in 1603, as performed by Chamberlain's in Oxford and Cambridge. The company's last known visit to Cambridge[33] (where Gabriel Harvey, native of Saffron Walden, was a Fellow of Pembroke) is recorded in 1594 or 1595, at the time when they were performing U. There is no record of them at either University at any later date.

Thus U, now shorn of its taboo, is logically linked through Q1 to Q2, which are plainly announced on both their title-pages as Shakespeare's succesive versions of his own play.

All these roads lead straight to the expression U—>Q1. Only a dizzying U-turn can avoid it. Before the two have a chance to collide and interconnect, in full view of the reading public, U 1589-1601 has to be driven back into obscurity and Q1 1603 pushed up a blind alley and abandoned as a hypothetical "piracy" made by a hypothetical "reporter," i.e. a hypothetical "actor," in a hypothetical fit of "memorial reconstruction" from hypothetical "performances at the Globe" of a hypothetical "*Hamlet* c.1600" i.e. a hypothetical pre-existing "revision" corresponding to a hypothetical pre-existing "text behind" F 1623.

These conjured rabbits frantically breed dozens more, including the equally feigned complicity and corruption of entire professions, such as actors, publishers, booksellers, compositors and copyists. Only modern editors are immune. Yet no two of them can agree about what these hypotheses entail, or whence they derive, or how they are justified, or indeed what they actually are, or anything except their unquestionable correctness. It is fortunate for these theories that they need no objective evidence, otherwise the least twitch of Ockham's Razor would have excised them, decades ago. Instead, the principle of parsimony has been recklessly replaced by the principle of profligacy, and literary conjecture is deemed entitled to dictate historical fact. Above all, the consensus taboo must be obeyed. This has always owned its prestige and power to "the city of London and the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford," as Q1 says on its title page.That text itself is unobtainable in any modern edition. Its own plain evidence remains unheard, because it has been condemned by London, Cambridge and Oxford editors.

Elsewhere, however, these same hypotheses of "memorial reconstruction" have gained little ground. The general public throughout the world is still unaware of them. Contrary to the alleged academic consensus, they have never found universal scholarly favour; they are especially mistrusted in America and Germany. All modern Shakespeareans who have publicly analysed them have rejected[33,34] them as unfit for consumption. The mute inertia of the entrenched English establishment has weathered these powerful counterblasts. Yet all rational readers, and some editors, must still feel the chill force of what Hardin Craig wrote in 1961: "There is . . . no evidence, that any plays were ever memorially reconstructed." On *Hamlet,* Craig offers a specific refutation. The text of Q1 "arbitrates between the texts of Q2 and F when they disagree"; therefore Q1 "is not a reported version of either Q2 or F." This powerful argument is compressed; but that cannot jsutify its consistent neglect. Only Harold Jenkins[4] so much as mentions Hardin Craig, and then only to complain about his "eccentric theories," i.e. his original thought. Yet the truly eccentric theories of John Dover Wilson (1934)[35] or George Duthie (1941)[36] are still accepted as gospel truth, despite their flagrant incompatibility, incoherence and total lack of objective evidence,

Wilson set himself the scholarly task of dispassionately investigating the textual status and provenance of Q1; or, in his own words, "I had set out to discover what sort of wild ass had perpetrated the ridiculous text of 1603." He thereupon devoted 430 pages, in two volumes, to discussing Q2 and F on the settled assumption that the "piracy" Q1 was "mainly a memorial reconstruction by some person or persons, whether actors or note-taking spectators, who were present at performances of it [ie. some unknown hypothetical version of *Hamlet*] in 1603." The only proof needed for these imaginary persons, plays, performances and piracies is that "critics, . . . I think, nowadays agree." From this one sandy foundation, glittering edifices of speculation soar skyward. "Concurrence of opinion here makes it possible to employ the debased text as a kind of control in our investigation of other versions, since it means that when a reading in Q1 is in substantial if not actually in verbal agreement with the corresponding reading in either Q2 or F, there is a *prima facie* probability that the said reading was current in performance at the Globe."

All this is just shameless nonsense. Of course opinion can neither provide a control nor create a probability. Wilson simply assumes, because others have assumed, that Q1 was mainly produced by a memorising or note-taking process. Yet his own word "mainly" tacitly concedes that much of the Q1 text cannot conceivably have been so caused. If the facts cannot be explained by the theory, so much the worse for the facts; they will just have to fend for themselves. The imaginary process is then illicitly generalised, with astounding consequences. Wilson helpfully supplies an Appendix of 177 Q1 agreements with Q2 against F and 173 with F against Q2. He thus relies on the very facts which, according to Craig, disprove "memorial reconstruction."

But Wilson had devised a self-validating version of his hypothesis. He actually believed, and said, that these 350 readings form "a kind of control." His unspoken reasoning runs thus. These resemblances are far too many for mere coincidence. So they must mainly represent what the memoriser or note-taker (about whom "critics agree") heard and reported from actual performance. Their presence in Q1 therefore entails their presence in an earlier version of Shakespeare's play, which must therefore have contained both Q2 and F readings. This Mad Hatter's logic was solemnly incorporated into Wilson's 1934 edition of Hamlet,[37] which a University Press reprinted for fifty years: "Whatever may have been the nature of the piracy, and however the pirate procured his copy," Q1 "is in large measure based upon a memorised report of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as performed in 1601 or 1602 on the Globe stage. . . . Many of (its readings) are of use as corroborating readings in the other and better texts."

The following props are necessary to keep the theory afloat. "Whatever," "however"=never mind the details. "The piracy," the pirate" = Wilson's names for his own theories. "In large mesure" = as before, these theories are admittedly inadequate, though infallible. "Memorised report" = Wilson's private fantasy. Shakespeare's Hamlet=Wilson's *Hamlet*, i.e. the non-existent text created by the infallible fantasy. "In 1601 or 1602" = Wilson has now noticed that his previous "1603" allows insufficient time for his hypotheses, which have accordingly been granted a generous extension. "On the Globe stage" = in Wilson's imagination, which has now created not only a memorising or note-taking pirate, and an unknown play, but arranged for Globe performances of it and smuggled the necessary pirate into its audience or cast.

Wilson's sole evidential basis remains exactly the same as before, in almost the same words: "critics . . . all seem now to be agreed."[37] True to form, even that was entirely false; thus Frank Hubbard[34VIa,b], had already published evidence and arguments, more than ten years earlier, to show that Q1 was neither a piracy nor a memorial reconstruction. But the University of Wisconsin in the 1920s has proved no match for the University of Cambridge from 1934 to the present day. Wilson saw no need to mention Hubbard, not even to dismiss him as eccentric.

The climactic irony is that in fact no critic or commentator before or since has ever accepted Wilson's special patent brand of note-taking or memorisation theory, with the sole exception of Philip Edwards,[5] Wilson's immediate successor as the Cambridge *Hamlet* editor. Edwards builds further immense extensions on to Wilson's shaky premises. In the beginning, there was one notional Shakespeare play containing both Q2 and F readings. Then how could each of those two actual texts have been created ? Nothing could be simpler. All we need to imagine in addition to the play and its performances and the piratical note-taker, are a book-keeper and his theatre transcript of Shakespeare's holograph foul papers, (in which the book-keeper altered certain words, "presumably" because he thought them "altogether too outlandish or unfamliar" and omitted certain passages which Shakespeare had maked for deletion and also omitted two passages not thus marked, and added a third, and made "an increasing number of other changes," designed to reduce the number of characters) supplemented by Q2 compositors who incorporated the pirated Q1 text and also ignored or overlooked Shakespeare's deletion-marks (thus preserving "much that Shakespeare himself has discarded"), together with a second transcription of the first fair copy made by a careless copyist who "did untold damage by casualness and rash improvement," thus producing the Folio text guilelessly printed as authentic Shakespeare by his friends and editors Heminges and Condell.

True to the Cambridge tradition, this new Niagara of invention flows solely from what is "generally recognised"[5] and "generally thought."[5] Elsewhere such claims are just as baseless as before. In fact, the Dover Wilson account of "memorial reconstruction" remains totally unrecognised by all editors except Edwards. It contradicts Wilson's own earlier theories[38] as well as the main modern version, which envisages Q1 as a corrupt report of a known extant text, essentially F, as "proved" by direct verbal comparison. The Wilson-Edwards model dispenses with even that degree of "proof" by invoking the hypothetical reconstruction, by the hypothetical memory of a hypothetical entity, of a hypothetical play, which is downright ridiculous. It even offers a further self-refutation *ad absurdum*. Let it be granted that Q1 is indeed a note-taker's memorised report of an actual play in actual performance. But then that play must surely have contained, for example, the otherwise unknown scene between the Queen and Horatio, and other such unique features; thus the counsellor character must have been called Corambis, not Polonius, and his servant Montano, not Reynaldo. That play must therefore have resembled Q1, rather than Q2 or F. Therefore Q1 is not a note-taker's memorised report of either Q2 or F; and still less, *a fortiori*, of any hypothetical hybrid between the two. If Q1 is any such report, or abridgement, then it must be a report or abridgement of an earlier version of Q1 itself.

The final self-rebuttal of the Cambridge theory 1934-1985 is its own explanation of F as the damage done by Wilson's "slovenly playhouse scribe"[37] who reappears after fifty years in the wilderness as an irresponsibly careless copyist "with a cavalier indifference to the ethic of fidelity to one's copy."[5] In the Oxford view, this same agent was William Shakespeare carefully revising his sublime masterpiece for definitive publication. Each of these theories must annihilate the other; and an actual person discharging his known habitual task is surely preferably to an imaginary entity engaged to work for a theory.

The requirements of the Oxford-Arden "memorial reconstruction" theory, though just as demanding, are completely incompatible with Cambridge. Their basic proofs however take exactly the same tone, now scored for solo trumpet. Their vicarious condemnation of Q1 as a corrupt memorial piracy is "one of the achievements of modern scholarship."[4] "It is sufficient to say that in the first three decades of this century [this] view won more and more support, so that eventually E.K. Chambers . . . was able to write: 'It is generally accepted. . . .' "[6] These theological strains continue: Chambers "prepares the way" for Duthie, a previous Oxford editor who (according to the present Oxford editor) "showed, beyond all reasonable doubt, that Q1 is a reported text put together by a process of memorial reconstruction to provide a prompt copy for, in all probability, a band of actors playing outside London."[6] About this, if nothing else, Arden agrees: "it has been conclusively demonstrated (especially by Duthie,")[4] that Q1 is an abridged corrupt memorial version of Shakespeare's play.

Such claims are outrageous. In the first place, both Oxford and Arden believe that the play thus reconstructed was essentially F. But this completely contradicts what Duthie explicitly says in his own summary: "the Q1 reporter based his text essentially on that of Q2." Worse still, Duthie himself rightly disclaims having proved anything at all; his whole book is only "the general hypothesis which I would advance." W.W. Greg, the scholar Duthie chose to write a foreword, says point-blank: "It is not to be supposed that [this] monograph will be accepted as offering a final solution to the problem. It is hardly to be desired that it should."

So much for the Oxford and Arden notions of conclusive proof beyond reasonable doubt. Now for Duthie's own proposed hypothesis. He too begins with the traditional observances. "It has been realised," "Various critics," "modern scholarship"[36] and similar self-serving litanies are intoned throughout. Duthie writes as a convinced and zealous reconstructionist. He too assumes *a priori* that his borrowed beliefs are true. His declared methods prove only that he too has no firm grasp of what constitutes evidence or reasoning, let alone proof. He purposes to address his mind to the question "is Q1 a reported play ?" and he answers, yes, it must be, because some parts are reported better than others. This may read like an unkind parody; but it is what Duthie actually asserts, on page after page. Thus in *Hamlet* Q1 "the parts of certain characters are consistently better reported than those of others." Further, "if one or two actors" attempted to reconstruct a play, "the standard of accuracy might well be low except at points where they were themselves involved." These gratuitous assumptions are then solemnly hailed as their own internal evidence. In other early quartos as well as *Hamlet* Q1 "there is internal evidence that the method of transmission was memorial reconstruction effected by actors who took certain parts"; such texts "give evidence, by the inequality of reporting of different parts, of being memorial reconstructions," "the evidence is inequality of the standard of reporting, the speeches of certain characters being consistently on a higher level than those of the others, and the general level of the text being higher when these characters are present on the stage."[36] And so on, *passim*.

How did such breathtakingly blatant question-begging ever come to be countenanced for a moment, let alone canonised for decades ? Of course the 'characters' , thus feigned to be actual actors, are just extra hypotheses. Only in Shakespeare studies could any theory ever have been proved by its own corollaries. Even the other *Hamlet* editors remain unimpressed. Two of them[1,2] omit all mention of Duthie. A third[5] confines his name to a footnote. Even his avowed adherents feel free to reject his teaching outright, at need, e.g. "This, I am afraid, is where Duthie is mistaken."[4] However, the denial of Duthie by unbelievers is passed over in silence. Thus the cogent counter arguments of A.A. Jack (1950),[39] W.D. Taylor (1950),[40] and A.B. Weiner (1962)[36] are not even cited, let alone rebutted. Nor are any of the copious refutations[33,34] of memorial reconstruction over the last sixty years, because "nothing is gained from following the controversy in detail."[6] Indeed, much might be lost, including yet another Oxford cause. Arden complains of "persistent opposition"[4] (a revealing phrase) from Hardin Craig, without even hinting at the grounds for it. Arden's further dismissal of R. Burkhardt[37] omits all mention of his reasons for rejecting memorial reconstruction as the cause of *Hamlet* Q1.

Again, neither of Duthie's disciples admits that their admired authority also "proved," by the self-same methods that *King Lear* Q 1609 was a "memorial reconstruction" of the supposedly pre-existing 1623 version,[41] a notion so manifestly grotesque that even Duthie himself withdrew it, albeit belatedly, grudgingly and unobtrusively.[42] The same Duthie also claimed, just as crassly, in this same 1941 *Hamlet* monograph, that *The Taming of A Shrew* 1594 was a "memorial reconstruction" of the supposedly preexisting 1623 version, which entails a unique feat of memory, namely, forgetting the Folio play's location, the names of its characters, and all but one of its 3000 lines. Duthie later withdrew this theory too, for its own reconstruction and repair.[43]

Is Duthie's parallel *Hamlet* hypothesis really so sacrosanct ? Is it not far more likely to be just another example of his own confused and confessed inability to distinguish between an original play and a derivative piracy and indeed betwen a revered masterpiece and a botched corruption ? Duthie's own account of that *Lear* fiasco is well worth recalling in this context:

> I adopted for [*King Lear*] Q1 a theory which had already been advanced by Dr. D.L. Patrick[44] to explain *Richard III* Q 1597, namely that the text is a memorial reconstruction made by the entire company. I thought of the company as being in the provinces, temporarily deprived of its prompt-book, and desirous of producing a new one; and I imagined its personnel gathered round a scribe, each dictating his own speeches. . . . The Q1 text as it stands could hardly have served in manuscript as a prompt-book.. . I was forced to suggest therefore, that the scribe wrote down (as best he could)all that he heard (or thought he heard) in a very hasty manner... and then later produced the required prompt-book by transcribing his work with the necessary modifications. . . .

In other words, Duthie calmly appropriated someone else's baseless conjecture[34 IV a,b] about some other play and forced it to fit *King Lear* by fettling the facts, thus producing a hundred pages of sheer irresponsible nonsense. He is less than candid about his arguments, which were spuriously presented as proof and fact ("the hypothesis of reporting is inevitable,"; "it is a reported text," etc.). They are, down to the last detail, exactly the same as his approach to *Hamlet;* with the same appeal to some supposed authority, and the same imaginary provinces, deprivation, desire, scribe, mishearings, modifications, and all the rest. However, Duthie is perfectly frank about his actual procedures, which clearly seem to him characteristic of standard Shakespearean scholarship: "I adopted," "I thought of," "I imagined," "I was forced to suggest." Such utterances are still dauntingly familiar. Compare the Duthie-inspired Arden account of what happened to *Hamlet:* "What we [i.e.I] have to suppose is that a group of actors, wishing to perform a play of which they had no book, would make a book from what could be remembered by one or more of their number who had acted in the play before."[45]

In the ordinary world of discourse, this reckless invention of unevidenced entities and circumstances is exactly what we do not have to suppose, and indeed must not, if we wish to be taken seriously. It is, furthermore, a mere curtain-raiser for the free play of hypothesis now about to be performed. Here is a more complete account of what we have to suppose.

For a start, we have to postulate that Shakespeare had written no *Hamlet* play before 1600. He then converted someone else's successful stage play U into the unactably lengthy Q2 , and instantly revised it into the unactably lengthy F, which was soon abridged for stage presentation in yet another version. Next this unknown abridgement is required to be rehearsed and acted, by Shakespeare's own company, in some unrecorded location, for any period short enough to conform with the theory. It cannot be allowed a long and successful run, or there would be too little time left for what now has to happen to it before 1603 at the latest. As we contemplate this brief vision of the Lord Chamberlain's Men with their complete manuscript and copied parts of an abridged acting version of a pre-F in performance at the Globe, the whole insubstantial pageant suddenly fades. The Globe dissolves. Most of the actors melt into thin air, taking their written roles with them. They leave behind a mysterious rump, a "group of actors" with a curious collective wish to go on acting their lost *Hamlet* long after everyone else has stopped. These stragglers have however failed to retain, or perhaps just petulantly thrown away, their own copies. All this must have been a sudden whim of theirs. Tlhey have nothing except the memories of their own roles; they had no special reason to attend to any of the others, not even the lines spoken in their presence on stage.

At least we know that Shakespeare himself was not among them, or they would have done better. As it is, they seem touchingly helpless and naive. Yet they are now, in a second spectacular transformation scene, unmasked as unprincipled pirates, motivated solely by greed for gain and eager to dishonour their famous company and betray their great master. All they need is the complete text of a *Hamlet* play and another gang of equally unscrupulous scoundrels to act it, preferably on a provincial tour of which no records will be kept, in places where the dim bumpkins will be delighted by a botched travesty. At this point, for a welcome change, the plot thins. All but one of the "group of actors" now quietly disappear in their turn; and who can blame them ? Only one of them is available for the complete memorial reconstruction of Hamlet; and he miraculously manages it single-handed. He can be identified beyond doubt as the actor who played Marcellus, Lucianus and Voltemand, in any required combination, because those Q1 lines are close to F and may thus be feigned as recollected from a conveniently mislaid abridged pre-F text. This is the non-existent backbone of the whole hapless hypothesis.

This lone actor's memory is unprofessionally erratic. For example, he has forgotten his own name; he thinks he is called Voltemar. He begins inauspiciously by ruining the most famous *coup de théâtre* in stage history; to the best of his recollection, it was the *on-duty* sentry who cried out "who's there ?" Yet he can remember quite accurately many of the 2000 lines spoken when he had no occasion to hear them. Others he is notably less clear about; thus he recalls "row of the pious chanson will show you more" as "verse of the godly ballet will tell you all," and "that is the question" as "ay, there's the point." He also reports the rejoinder of Laertes "Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric,/I am justly killed by mine own treachery" as "even as a coxcomb should, /Foolishly slain with my own weapon," with equally peculiar memory lapses in scores of other passages. This professional actor remembers much less *Hamlet* after recent performances than many an ordinary reader after a long lifetime.

His mind plays such impish pranks as writing episodes in the wrong order, recalling the name Polonius as "Corambis," and Reynaldo as "Montano," changing Gertrude's character, adding a new scene between her and Horatio, making Hamlet a young man, and keeping the rhymed-couplet form in the play-scene while altering all the words and demoting their King and Queen into a Duke and a Duchess. At some stage this reconstructor realises that however well or ill he may recall *Hamlet* on his own, he cannot perform it without the Prince of Denmark and others. Now comes the most amazing transformation of all. At this point there providentially arrives a whole new troupe of travelling hypotheses, all just as corrupt and venal as our reconstructing actor. He must have had unusual powers of persuasion, as well as recollection, because they all willingly agree to assist in his improvised piracy, and take it on the required mystery tour. As it happens, they have nothing else to do, and nowhere else to go; and as it turns out, they can act all the roles required. So the reconstructor and his new friends write, copy, rehearse, and perform their bogus *Hamlet*. All ends happily. Not only do they escape whipping; their corrupt travesty appeals to equally piratical printers, publishers and booksellers as well as the playreading and theatregoing public, who were readily duped and defrauded in Shakespeare's day.

This is how the Duthie theory looks when it emerges into the light of history. So, it has to be removed again, with all speed. Requests for documentary testimony are treated with outright contempt. "If you come across a mutilated corpse you don't deny a murder because nobody has reported one."[4] This absurd analogy betrays attitude and approach alike. Never mind if the body is on a railway line, or near a chain saw. There is only one conceivable cause of mutilation, whether of corpses or copy. The literary detective has decided on murder, in advance. Before long, the suspect will be arrested without trial and hanged in public, after his quarto has been given a bad name. His own name is "Marcellus." We know this for a fact despite the silence of the archives beecause "the evidence is in the texts themselves."

Yet again, no proofs are needed for this fundamental idea beyond "it is generally accepted . . ." and so forth. Never mind if other editors manage without "Marcellus"[1] or else treat him as merely one suspect among others.[12]

It is vain for A.B.Weiner[33c] to object that in fact "Marcellus" cannot remember his own lines, not even *ex hypothesi*. The theory has become hallowed. "In the course of his enquiry, Duthie accepted it. What could be more conclusive than that ? But it has no independent substance whatever, as even its own inventor H.D. Gray[45] later conceded.[46] As he explains, he began by assuming the truth of memorial reconstruction, and asked himself which actor was responsible for it. This blatant question-begging is still, 70 years later, being advanced as proof of its own assumption. "The basis for the theory," that "the man who vamped up Q1 from memory" was an actor who had played certain parts, "is the demonstrable fact that these parts are rendered with considerable fidelity to the authentic text."[6]

But of course this is not the basis for a theory; the 'actor' is just the theory itself made up to look like a fact, and playing its allotted part accordingly. By the same logic, this 'actor' could also be the boy soprano singer of Ophelia's Q1 ditties, which equally embody the "authentic text." The objective question is obviously just "Why ?," not "How can the facts best be squared with my pet theory ?" The clumsy manipulation of the puppet "Marcellus" betrays the strings already attached in Oxford and Arden. He swarms all over Q1 like a stage army. Is the supposed correspondence with the supposed "text behind F" very close ? "Marcellus" must be in top form. Is there serious divergence ? He must have been out of earshot or out of sorts. Sustained resemblance means "Marcellus" on stage; difference, off. Supposedly inferior reading prove his stupidity and confusion; supposed abridgements, his ability and acumen. Supposed omissions (i.e. presumed F text with no actual Q1 equivalent) entail deliberate abridgement or involuntary amnesia; fortunately, either will do. Supposed additions (i.e. actual Q1 text with no presumed F equivalent) must be new material supplied by "Marcellus," who has temporarily forgotten that he is an abridger. Supposed reversals in scene-order, such as the Q1 placement of the nunnery scene, are all aberrations on the part of "Marcellus." He must also be somehow responsible for the changes of names and characterisation, and the added scene, and the shift of ideas and phrases and dialogue from one part of the action to another, and the incorporation of lines from other plays, all by sheer inadvertence. For all such purposes the Protean character actor "Marcellus" is first enrolled as a member of Shakespeare's own company and then dismissed as a "hired man who afterwards left or was turned off" and then obligingly became a pirate, a reporter, a hack-poet, a paraphraser, a playwright, a skilled abridger, an actor in other Shakespeare plays (such as *Twelfth Night*) a member of other companies (where he played in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*) and an uncomprehending idiot, exactly as the theory requires. These stupefying assumptions, found only in Arden and Oxford, will help the outside world to see who "Marcellus" really is. He can not only "recollect" but "anticipate" lines he had no reason to hear. In Arden, he had "an invention which is helped out b words and phrases rising in the mind from a previous contact with"[4] *Haml* and other Shakespeare plays. In Oxford, Greg's "Marcellus" is approvingl quoted: "the words and phrases of the original that he wove into his verse ros unbidden from the subconscious depths."[47] Whose subconscious mind migh rationally be thus described? George Duthie's elaborating his theory, perhaps or Shakespeare's, writing a play?

At least they were real people. But the Duthie theory consists solely o invented and unverifiable entities, and thus provides its own disproof. All i transparent devices for attributing textual variants to such freaks of memor as "confusion," "anticipation," "recollection," and so on, together with a its fantasies about dates, actors' lost prompt-copy provincial tours and so fort reappear in Duthie's exactly parallel theories on *King Lear*,[41] already glance at above, which were admittedly[42] selfdeluding folly. Furthermore Duthie i readily refutable by facts freely available ever since 1605, which had bee published in detailed tabulations by Gustav Tanger,[48] Frank Hubbard[34,VIIb] an Dover Wilson[38] himself, and were at last decisively adduced as disproof b Hardin Craig.[33,4] Here is a further bombardment from a different direction wi the same ammunition. Q1 cannot be a report of F, because it agrees with Q against F in 177 readings, which must *ex hypothesi* be mere mistakes that tall with Q2 by pure chance, which is absurd. Nor, conversely, can Q1 revert t its Duthian roots and be a report of Q2, for 173 analogous reasons. Nor, a *fortiori*, can the theory be saved by appeals to a mythical "text behind" F o Q2 or any such hypothetical hybrid. All such plays, performances, persons an procedures are non-existent; and *ex nihilo nihil fit* for publication. Ex Marcellus with full supporting cast of pirates and other extras.

The alleged piracy can be dealt with summarily. Exceptionally, the thre chief judges[4,5,6] all agree. They find piracy proved. As usual they feel able t dispense with evidence, apart from the customary formula "it is generall thought." The same applies to their unique yet unanimous explanation of th many detailed Q1-Q2 identities in spelling and lineation. For this we have t suppose that the gross piracy Q1 was taken as a model by the printers of Q and solemnly incorporated into a corrected second edition publicly announce as "newly imprinted according to the true and perfect copy," a phrase whic is thus newly interpreted to include the false and imperfect copy. That Q "*was* so used"[4] is freely asserted as a known fact. "James Roberts' compositors, when they were setting the second quarto, had in front of them not only a manuscript but a copy of the bad quarto of 1603 and they frequentl copied its readings in the first act and possibly elsewhere"[5]; "the [Q2 compositors tried to get help from a copy of" [Q1][5]; "the use by the Q compositors of a copy of Q1, particularly in the first act, can mean that [an reading common to Q2 and Q1 is an error deriving from the latter"[5]; a "examplar of Q1 . . . was used by compositor X when he set the first act of" Q2,[6] and so on. But all these are just extra helpings demanded by a greedy pet theory that has to be kept fed. As Craig[33,4] says, " to save the theory that Q1 is a degenerate form of F, some scholars have introduced an intervening process. The printer of Q2, they say, had at hand a copy of Q1‘ to which he resorted from time to time in search of guidance in the reading of Shakespeare's manuscript. The device has no testimony to support it and but little convincing bibliographical evidence. The conjecture makes use of the dangerous practive of introducing into the system an invented cause." If this conjecture had any substance, furthermore, it would surely permit the inference, in a real world, that Q1 was an authentic Shakespeare text; not even the despised Tudor printer would check the true from the false. Besides, the Oxford editor has briefly glimpsed, before the curtains of preconviction close again, the reason why this conjecture cannot be true.

How then he asks, did "compositor X" come to make the "fairly numerous mistakes" that this supposed copy of Q1 should have saved him from making ?[6] One obvious answer is that there was no such copy. But the chimera of Q1 contamination is far preferred to the simple solution that all the many and striking Q1-Q2 identities derive from manuscript sources, that would make Q1 a Shakespeare manuscript, which is now literally unthinkable.

In pre-taboo times it was not only thinkable but congently inferred from documented facts, for two separate reasons. F.S. Boas,[49] argued, from the Harvey 1598-1601 *termini* and the absence of any recorded visit by the Chamberlain's Men to Cambridge or Oxford after the mid-1590s, that the *Hamlet* performed there was Q1, which represented "Shakespeare's revision of the semi-Senecan play on Hamlet . . . mentioned by Nashe in 1589." John Dover Wilson[38] had earlier argued on bibliographical grounds that the spellings, misprints, and use of inverted commas shared by both Quartos proved that parts of Q1 must have derived from a Shakespeare manuscript, written long before 1603. Neither of these powerful and mutually corroborative contentions has ever been refuted; they have merely been silently replaced by "Marcellus" with his infinitely flexible memory, and compositor X with his infinitely adjustable copy of Q1. Late in the 1920s times changed, and with them the Oxbridge consensus. Wilson himself forgot his brief flirtation with the facts, and disowned its consequences. When he returned to *Hamlet* in 1934 he inititiated fifty years of chaos and confusion. He had already foreseen and explained this catastrophe in 1918, as follows: "the method pursued hitherto has been predominantly biographical; in the next stage it will have to be predominantly literary." That was a pity, because in historical and logical studies "predominantly literary" is likely to mean "wrong."

It often means "subjective." Thus the New Penguin *Hamlet* made history by including as 3.2. 43-55 the following lines, found only in Q1:

> and then you have some again that keeps one suit of jests, as a man is known by one suit of apparel; and gentlemen quote his jests down in their tables, before they come to the play, as thus 'Cannot you stay till I eat my porridge ?', and 'You owe me a quarter's wages,' and 'My coat wants a cullison,' and 'Your beer is sour', and blabbering with his lips, and thus keeping in his cinquepace of jests, when , God knows, the warm clown cannot make a jest except by chance, as the blind man catcheth a hare.

Here are a hundred words new to the canon, the only such official bonus since the insurrection scene from *Sir Thomas More* was first included in a standard Edition.[50] These new words qualify as Shakespeare's, under a double imprimatur[51];they are deemed to represent an actor's adequate memory of an authentic text. For the Arden editor however this is absurd; the added lines are "known only to the reported text Q1," so there is "no evidence to believe that Shakespeare wrote" them.

This dramatic confrontation derives directly from two diametrically opposed literary theories, alias First and Second Marcellus. The former, inspired by Dover Wilson, remembered and transcribed those lines more or less accurately; the latter, a disciple of Duthie, just made up any old nonsense and called it *Hamlet*.

Typically, no one attends to the actual Q1 text, though this is the only real evidence. Shakespeare-lovers will note for example the noun-verb discord "some keeps," the pun on "suit," associated with "apparel," the lively use of "cinquepace," the special collocation "warm clown," i.e. one whose jests are spontaneous, and the amusing application of a quasi-proverbial phrase. The fourfold insistence on "jest" recalls the emphatically repetitive style of *Titus Andronicus*, c. 1589. Further, two of the jests later attributed to Richard Tarleton[52] concern "beer" and a "cullison" i.e. a badge of arms; and he was a Queen's comedian who died in 1588. So these lines may derive from U, 1589, if Shakespeare wrote them as the title-page of Q1 claims. Even if we would rather trust literary theory, a reporter who actually reports is surely preferable to one who gratuitously invents lines that still sound like Shakespeare four centuries later.

In other Q1 contexts however the New Penguin editor inexplicably abandons his reliable reporter and, for example, omits this sample of how Hamlet reproaches his mother:

> Here is your husband with a face like *Vulcan*,
> a look fit for a murder and a rape,

a dull dead hanging look, and a hell-bred eye
to affright children and to amaze the world.

Again, the Shakespeare-lover will know, e.g. from *Titus Andronicus*, why a damned villain should resemble Vulcan, black-faced as Satan from underground furnace-fires; hence perhaps the evocative compound "hell-bred." The vivid expression "hanging look," according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was first coined by Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*. "So dull, so dead in look" appears in 2 *Henry IV;* "afffrights our children" in 1 *Henry VI;* "The world amazes" in *Venus and Adonis*. If this was "Marcellus," he chose a good model. Here are some further samples of his work:

For though the favour of your grace might stay me,
yet something is there, whispers in my heart.

Being the joy and half-heart of your mother.

Him I have lost, I must of force forgo .

None lives on earth but he is born to die.

or that the universal globe of heaven would turn all to chaos.

therefore keep aloof
lest that he trip thy honour and thy fame.

receive none of his letters,
For lovers' lines are snares to entrap the heart.

He is bereft of all the wealth he had.
The jewel that adorned his feature most
is filched and stol'n away.

He doth unclasp his hold, and parts away,
silent, as is the mid time of the night.

bound
By love, by duty and obedience.

Borne before an everlasting judge.

Strike more than wonder in judicial ears.

And now the blood that filled my youthful veins
Runs weakly in their pipes, and all the strains
Of music, which whilome please mine ear
Is now a burthen that age cannot bear.

To make increase of shame, and seal damnation.

O do not glare with looks so pitiful
Lest that my heart of stone yield to compassion
And every part that should assist revenge
Forgo their proper powers, and fall to pity.

Alas, it is the weakness of thy brain
Which makes thy tongue to blazon thy heart's grief.

And in his death your infamy shall die.

O Time, how swiftly runs our joys away.
Content on earth was never certain bred,
Today we laugh and live, tomorrow dead.

I will no reconcilement, but by blood.

Being crossed by the contention of the winds.

Then I perceive there's treason in his looks
That seem'd to sugar o'er his villainy.

Believe me, Horatio, my heart is on a sudden very sore all hereabout.

Were such lines, and some 150 others, really invented by someone trying to reconstruct Shakespeare, or were they remembered ? These are the contradictory choices offered by the modern literary method. If the second is right, then (though no one seems to notice) those Q1 lines are *prima facie* authentic; and so is the entire Q1 text. Wilson's bibliographical method concurs.

So do the historical facts. James Roberts officially registered (1602), and Nicholes Ling published as Shakespeare's (Q1 1603) a *Hamlet* play "as acted by" Shakespeare's own company. Then Roberts printed and Ling published Shakespeare's enlarged and corrected version (Q2 1604-5). That world masterpiece "must have come from the Globe, or from the hands of Shakespeare, himself,"[6] into the hands of Roberts; Ling already owned its copyright, as a result of his publication of Q1. Either these are the most surprising prizes in the history of piracy, or else Roberts and Ling were reputable tradesmen going about their business in the real world where they each flourished for thirty years and more. In that world publishers and actors rarely conspired to defraud the public, and an inferior *Hamlet* published twenty years earlier was rather unlikely to have been written as the later of two versions, even by its own author, let alone compiled from the memory of a hired bit-part player. In any era, the imagination of a Shakespeare editor is by far the most plausible source of any "memorial reconstruction." In Shakespeare's own time, moreover, the relevant factual data fit together without omission, rejection, adjustment or remainder, as follows.

The young Stratfordian, b. 1564, though far from well educated ("home-borne," ". . . could scarcely Latinise," 1589; "peasant . . . rude groom," 1592; "small Latin," 1623) had acquired early knowledge of legal proceedings ("noverint," 1589; "buckram gentleman," 1592), e.g. from a local inquest. Soon he was writing popular plays for the London stage, drawn from such sources as Seneca (1581; "English Seneca," 1589; "as Seneca . . . among the English," 1589) and Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1570; "French *Dowdy*," 1589; "translator," 1589, 1592) including a "Tragic History" (Q1, 1603; Q2, 1604-5) with a Stratford name (1579-80; 1585-96; 1616) about the "Revenge of Hamlet" (Senecan ghost, 1589; crying "revenge," 1594, 1601; title, 1602) as acted at three London threatres including his own (Newington Butts, 1594; Shoreditch, by 1596; Bankside, 1601) by his own company, and also in Cambridge (no later than 1595, Harvey, c. 1598; Q1 title-page, 1603). The same play ("Corambis") toured Germany in the 1590s; the Senecan prologue of *Der Bestrafte Bruder-mord* and its topical allusion to Portugal point to 1589; so would the possible Tarleton (d. 1588) reference in Q1. On the English stage Shakespeare's famous performance as the vengeful Ghost was ridiculed by his rivals (Nashe, 1589; Greene and Lodge, 1594; Lodge, 1596), who complained of his chequered career ("shifting companion," 1589; "Johannes Factotum," 1592) and mocked his early melodramatic style ("tragical speeches," 1589; "tiger's heart" . . . etc., 1592) which however impressed "the wiser sort" (Harvey, c. 1598) and strongly influenced other playwrights (Kyd, *Spanish Tragedy*, c. 1589; Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, c. 1600).

In every context, the dates now have a meaning. Thus the 1602 registration and release for publication of Q1 corroborate that it had already run its course on the stage some years earlier. As soon as that imprint had sold out, it could be properly replaced, as its author would wish, by the avowedly enlarged and improved version published as Q2. Later on, the habitual reviser Shakespeare must have envisaged and prepared for the publication of his collected plays. Not long before his death in April 1616, he had a convivial meeting with Ben Jonson. So the vicar of Stratford, John Ward, wrote c. 1661, during the lifetime of Shakespeare's daughter Judith, whose marriage in February 1616 might well have provided the occasion.[53] Later in that year, Ben Jonson's own First Folio of complete works was published in London; that topic was no doubt discussed. Shakespeare's own second thoughts, as interlined in his will, remain on written record; he added bequests of money to his close colleagues Heminges and Condell for the purchase of memorial rings. For the last time: "adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me." It was no mere coincidence that they assumed joint responsibility for what they called "the care and pain to have collected and published" their friends's own writings, in the Shakespeare First Folio of 1623. In its most famous commendatory poem, this same Shakespeare was recognisably described by Jonson, in a loving eulogy, as the disadvantaged countryman of Stratford who was not only an inspired natural writer but a conscientious reviser "upon The Muses' anvil"; an artist self-made as well as born. Here is Shakespeare's development from inauspicious beginnings to resplendent mastery by way of dedication and discipline, shaping and reshaping. Here is what happened to *Hamlet.*

All this firm and fertile terrain has long been fenced off by rigid official taboos. It is time to restore the public right of way that leads through successive *Hamlets* back to the real world of Shakespeare.

NOTES

1. *Hamlet*, ed. Nigel Alexander, Macmillan Shakespeare (Advisory Editor, Philip Brockbank) (London, 1973)

2. *Hamlet*, ed. T.J.B. Spencer, New Penguin Shakespeare (General Editor, T.J.B. Spencer, Associate Editor, Stanley Wells) (London, 1980)

3. *Hamlet*, as at n.2 above: Introduction by Anne Barton

4. *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, Arden Shakespeare (General Editiors: Harold F. Brooks, Harold Jenkins and Brian Morris) (London 1982),

5. *Hamlet* ed. Philip Edwards, New Cambridge Shakespeare (General Editor, Philip Brockbank) (Cambridge, 1985)

6. *Hamlet*, ed. G.H. Hibbard, Oxford Shakespeare (General Editor, Stanley Wells) (Oxford, 1987)

7. G.I. Duthie, *The 'Bad' Quarto of Hamlet* (Cambridge : 1941)

8. A. Cohn, *Shakespeare in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (London, 1865); the early repertory included a crude version of *Titus Andronicus.*

9. *Titus Andronicus* ed. J.C. Maxwell, Arden Shakespeare 1953, revised 1963, 1968, xxxi-xxxii.

10. Scrivener, lawyer's clerk.

11. First offenders were granted exemption if they could prove literacy (''benefit of clergy'') by reading a verse from the Bible, which might thus save their necks.

12. risque French books.

13. cf "Thou buckram scribe" (i.e. lawyer's clerk) *Woodstock* Anon.c.1590, 299

14 . Versions of all three were later played in Germany; cf. Cohn, note 8.

15. F.S. Boas *Shakespeare at the Universities* (Oxford 1923), 25 citing C.H. Cooper, Annals of Cambridge (Cambridge 1842) ii 538; the Oxford theatre records are unclear

16. cf. "alas, poor ghost"; "my father, me thinks I see my father"; "his beard . . a sable silver. . ." *Hamlet* I.ii.183; 240-2;I.v.4.

17. Executed February 1601, the only definite dating evidence generally discerned in this much-debated passage; but see note 18.

18. If Watson is Thomas Watson, he had died in 1592; and "flourishing" may merely mean 'popular'. If, as has been suggested, Harvey wrote this later than 1598, it is hard to see how Harvey's close friend for twenty years and more, Edmund Spenser (1552?-16 January 1599) could have been exhorted to "emulation" save during his own lifetime, i.e. in 1598.

19. The Swan theatre on Bankside.

20. As the Lord Chamberlain's company had been renamed under the patronage of James I

21. Late in that year because some copies are dated 1605.

22. But not in Q1, Q2 or F

23. Spelt Hamnet in the parish register, and hence in standard biographies and works of reference; but this is plainly just an alternative form of the same name, which is clearly written Hamlett (as well as Hamnet Sadler) in Shakespeare's will, 1616.

24. E.I. Fripp, *Shakespeare, Man and Artist* (London, 1938), ii, 146-7.

25. cf also Samuel Rowlands *The Night Raven*, 1618: "I will not cry Hamlet revenge my grieves."

26. Nicholas Rowe, "Some Account of the Life etc of Mr William Shakespeare," in *Works*, ed. N. Rowe (1709), vol. I, pp ii-iii.

27. Seneca, *Thyestes*, "avido fugaces ore captantem cibos," line 2, "abire in atrum carceris liceat mei'. line 70 "alveo medius tuo, Phlegethon, relinquar igneo cinctus freto," line 73.

28. 2 *Henry VI*, 2.1.137; also found in the anonymous additions (c.1600) to Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. There is no reason to suppose that Armin was mistaken in attributing the phrase to *Hamlet*.

29. cf. the "Italian translations" mentioned by Nashe in 1589

30. G.C. Moore Smith, *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1913) xi

31. F.S. Boas *Shakespeare and the Universities* (Oxford 1923) 250-60

32. Don Cameron Allen, *Francis Meres's Treatise 'Poetrie' : A Critical Edition* (Urbana, 1933)

33. In general:

- (a) W. Rubenstein, *Shakespeare's Bad Quartos* (Yale, 1950)
- (b) A. Feuillerat, *The Composition of Shakespeare's Plays* (Yale, 1953) 35-47
- (c) E. Everitt, *The Young Shakespeare* (Copenhagen, 1954)
- (d) Hardin Craig, *A New Look at Shakespeare's Quartos* (New York, 1961)
- (e) A.B. Weiner, ed., *Hamlet, the First Quarto 1603* (New York 1962) 25-45
- (f) R. Burkhardt, *Shakespeare's Bad Quartos* (The Hague, Paris, 1970)
- (g) D. Schamp, "Thesen zu Shakespeare", 666 *Theater Heute* (Nov-Dec 1974) 28-35
- (h) E. Sams, 'Shakespeare's text and common sense', *TLS* 2 Sept 1983, 933-4
- (i) E. Sams, ed. *Edmund Ironside* (London, 1986) vii-xv, 365-7

34. In particular:

I *The Taming of A Shrew* Q 1594:

- (a) D. George, "Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', *SQ* xxxvii (1981), 311
- (b) E. Sams, 33 (h)
- (c) E. Sams, 'The Timing of the Shrews', *N & Q*, (March 1985)33-45
- (d) S. Wells, *The Complete Works* (Oxford, 1986) 29

II *The Whole Contention* Q 1594-5:

- (a) C. Greer, "The York and Lancaster Quarto-Folio Sequence" *PMLA* 48 (1933) 655-705
- (b) A Richardson, *The first part of the Contention* (Diss, Yale) 1953
- (c) C. Pronty, *The Contention and Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI* (New Haven, 1954)
- (d) H. Craig, 33 (d)
- (e) E. Sams 33 (h)
- (f) G. Greer, *Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1986) 7.75
- (g) J. Jofen, in Foreword to *A Concordance to the Shakespeare Apocrypha*, ed. Ule, (Hildesheim, 1987) I, vii.

III *Romeo and Juliet* Q1 1597

- (a) Craig, 33(d), 54-65,81,88,95-6, 101-7, 105
- (b) 'Random Cloud' 'The marriage of Good and Bad Quartos' *SQ* 33 (1982) 417-431.

IV *Richard III* Q1 1597

- (a) Craig 33 (d) 109-11
- (b) K. Smidt, *Injurious Impostors and Richard III* (Oslo, 1964)
- (c) K. Smidt, *Memorial Transmission and Quarto Copy in Richard III: A Reassessment* (Oslo, 1970).

V *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Q1 1602

- (a) W. Bracy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Columbia, 1952)

VI *Hamlet* Q1 1603

- (a) *Hamlet* Q1 ed. F.G. Hubbard (Madison 1920)
- (b) F.G.. Hubbard *The Readings* of the First Quarto of *Hamlet PMLA* 38 (1923) 792-882
- (c) Craig, 33 (d) 75-83;
- (d) Weiner, 33 (e)

VII *King Lear* Q1 1608

- (a) G. Duthie, 'The Copy for King Lear, 1608 and 1623', in *King Lear*, ed. J. Dover Wilson, The New Shakespeare (Combridge 1960, R/1962, 1969, 1972, 1975, 1979) 131-2
- (b) Craig, 33(d), 10-17;
- (c) S.Wells "The Once and Future *King Lear*" in *The Divisions of The Kingdom* (Oxford, 1983) 1-22
- (d) G. Taylor, 'King Lear and Censorship,' *ibid* (Oxford, 1983) 75-119
- (e) G. Taylor, 'Date and Authorship of the Folio Version', ibid. 351-468
- (f) G. Taylor, *The Complete Works* (Oxford, 1986), 1025.

VIII *Pericles* Q1 1609

- (a) Craig, 33 (d), 17-26

35. J. Dover Wilson, *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's Hamlet* (Cambridge 1934)

36. G. Duthie, *The Bad Quarto of Hamlet* (Cambridge, 1941)

37. *Hamlet*, ed. J. Dover Wilson The New Shakespeare (Cambridge) 1934, 2/1936, rpt. 1941, 1948, 1954, 1957, 1961, 1964, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1977, 1978, 1980.

38. J. Dover Wilson, The Copy for Hamlet 1603; *The Hamlet Transcript* 1593 (London, 1918), also in the *Library ix* (1918), 153-85 and 217-47

39. A.A. Jack, *Young Hamlet* (Aberdeen,1950)

40. W.D. Taylor, introduction to item 39, xvii-xx

41. G.I. Duthie, Shakespeare's *King Lear:* ,A Critical Edition (Oxford, 1949).

42. *King Lear* ed. G.I. Duthie and J. D. Wilson (Cambridge 1960) 131f.

43. G.I. Duthie, "The Taming of a Shrew and The Taming of the Shrew" in *RES* xix (1943) 337-356.

44. Duthie refers to D.L. Patrick, *The Textual History of Richard III* (Stanford, 1936)

45. H.D. Gray, "The First Quarto Hamlet," *MLR*, x (1915)171-80

46.H.D. Gray, "*Hamlet* Q1 and Mr. Henry David Gray" *PMLA* 43(1928) 578-82

47. W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (Oxford, 1955), 301

48. G. Tanger, "The First and Second Quartos and the First Folio of *Hamlet:* their relation to each other" New Shakespeare Society, Transactions I (1880-2), 109-97

49. F.S. Boas, *Shakespeare and the Universities* (Oxford 1923), 26

50. *Complete Works* ed. C.J. Sisson (London 1953)

51. T.J.B. Spencer, General Editor of the New Penguin Shakespeare as well as its separate *Hamlet;* Stanley Wells, then Associate Editor of the series.

52. *Tarleton's Jests* 1611 ed. J.D. Halliwell, (London, 1844) pp.5, 12

53. See e.g. S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford, 1975), 242.

"When mercy seasons justice"
How (and Why) Hamlet Does Not Kill Claudius

DAVID C. H. MORGAN

If the problem of *Hamlet* causes critical disagreement, yet on one point all agree - Hamlet kills Claudius. Harold Jenkins may refer disparagingly to the "race" of critics - Knights, Prosser et all - who see the ghost as questionable or a devil; "To be" and the nunnery may cause heated debate; literary swords are drawn and contrary positions taken on a host of quibbles; yet almost all see how the play ends with Harley Granville-Barker's account:

> [Hamlet] takes vergeance. . . . At the sword thrust the courtiers raise a perfunctory cry of treason. But, though the wounded man cries pitifully
>
> O yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt.
>
> they do nothing. Then Hamlet drops the sword and takes the cup and drags the creature out, and - as one would medicine a dog - chokes his mouth open and pours the poison down; and he consecrates to this consummate moment his last outburst of mockery:
>
> Here thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane
> Drink off this potion. Is thy union here ?
> Follow my mother. [1]

Hamlet stabs Claudius and then forces him to drink the poison. To my knowledge, only Roy Battenhouse sees it otherwise: his Hamlet is

> the minster of a poisoned chalice, and in that sense a fellow celebrant with Claudius in a Black Mass . . . . [He] administers a devilish communion, thus sealing his priesthood as a Scourge of God as the play ends. [2]

Stripped of his ironic values ("Black" Mass, "devilish" communion), Battenhouse sees Hamlet *offering* Claudius the cup. But Harold Jenkins, speaking for the majority, rejects such "objections . . . to Hamlet's forcing the liquor on the King," arguing that "death from he cup as well as the sword is necessary so that the treachery falls on the inventor's head; the King is punished for the Queen he destroyed by being joined with her in death."[3] For most critics therefore, how Claudius dies is not even a question; Hamlet killing Claudius is so obvious that it needs no analysis. It is rare for critics to be so unanimous in this, Shakespeare's most contentious play; it is a jest of the gods that they read the eight lines from 5.2.322 in a way so totally wrong.

Hamlet: The point envenomed too ?
Then, venom, to thy work. [Hurts the King]
All: Treason ! Treason !
King: O yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt.
Hamlet: Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned Dane
Drink off this potion. Is thy union here ?
Follow my mother.
Laertes: He is justly served [4]

What I see is distinctly other: after Hamlet slightly wounds Claudius with the poisoned sword point, the court rushes to Claudius's defence as Hamlet drops the sword - and watches mutely as he offers Claudius the poisoned cup. Eventually taking the cup, Claudius drinks - and "kills" himself.

This is one of three readings of *Hamlet's* plot, the first of which has overwhelming support; Hamlet must revenge and eventually does. The second is that of Eleanor Prosser, L.C. Knights and others: Hamlet must not revenge but (unfortunately) does. Knights is so revulsed by Hamlet as a revenger that he sees him as morally sick.[5] Prosser's Hamlet, on the other hand, must not revenge but when he does it is "instinctive" and "emraged and savage"[6]; since the common passions of mankind make revenge inevitable, it is not his fault. The third reading, and one assimilating this second group, is mine; Hamlet must not revenge - and eventually does not. Hamlet's self-accusing awareness of his sinful equality with Claudius not only delays (i.e. "To be") but finally stops his revenge: since both are murderers, to judge Claudius is to judge himself. So, after Hamlet murders Polonius and, however reluctantly, recognises his moral kinship with Claudius (4.3. 49ff), we can thematically predict that he will probably not kill Claudius. *Hamlet* is thus about how Hamlet's conscience delays and ultimately prevents him killing Claudius; in traditional critical terms this is a "conscience" theory of the play. But, as my construction of *Hamlet* as a "merciful" tragedy indicates, the play is not about Hamlet's pursuit of revenge but how and why he recongnises the inadequacy of that revenge. Since *Hamlet* is about why Hamlet is merciful to Claudius, the action I argue for - scratching Claudius with the rapier and then offering him the cup - is how he is merciful.

But readers are apparently "predisposed to dismiss this argument as crazy" even though it "seems to address every objection."[7] One proposition inherent in this - that critics can merely state their predisposition without arguing for it - I discuss at the end. The question I address here is - why pay so much attention to what the action is ? Because it is fundamental to any discussion of the play. To ask "what meaning these actions [Hamlet not killing Claudius] have for the character of Hamlet as a revenger" thus fails to grasp an operational definition: *if Hamlet does not kill Claudius he is not a revenger*. This rather obvious logic thus compels the argument that "even if Hamlet *does* only scratch Claudius he has *performed* his revenge" - therefore, even on my construction of the action, he *is* a revenger. But revenge is retributive justice where a person is treated in an equal or worse fashion than he has treated another. Since Claudius killed Hamlet's father, Hamlet can only revenge by actually killing Claudius - in fact, in his revenge persona Hamlet not only wishes to kill Claudius but to damn him utterly (viz 3.3. 73-96); but if Claudius voluntarily drinks from the cup, he kills himself. Prima facie and with no reference to any special symbolism the action has, such drinking denies or negates Hamlet's revenge: see note 31. This argument thus fails because the actions defining Hamlet's revenge are not clearly understood.

Establishing the action is thus crucial: if Hamlet does not kill Claudius then something is rotten in the two centuries of criticism which sees Hamlet strangely delaying a revenge he eventually executes. As I would argue - Hamlet delays killing Claudius for the same reason he does not kill Claudius. But that anticipates. In accepting the burden of discussing why I see the action as I do, I wish to force one of two critical responses; the first is to shift the burden of proof, forcing revenge critics to analyse the texts and actually argue for seeing what they say they see. This of course is not only something they should have done anyway and have not (see note 3) but is something they do not want to do at all (see Conclusion). The second is to force discussion of an alternative question - given the action's probability, why does it occur ? Now I could discuss *why* Hamlet must not and eventually does not revenge by tracing the play's logic of conscience - from 1.5. (how the ghost's behaviour questions revenge) to 3.1. (how and why Hamlet's conscience stops the enterprise of killing Claudius) to 4.3. (the importance of Hamlet calling Claudius "mother") to 5.2. - digressing at points between to discuss the various ways the play considers the problems of judgement, justice and revenge. But all these clearly require analysis exceeding magazine word limit - and yet I must refer to them since otherwise this analysis will appear perversely isolated from what has gone before.

The Folio's stage direction for Hamlet's action "Hurts the King" is often translated "Stabs the King."[8] But the words are not conceptually equivalent: per the OED - to hurt is "to cause bodily injury to (by a blow or otherwise); to wound; to give bodily pain to" whereas to stab is "to wound (often to kill) with a *thrust* of a pointed weapon (chiefly with a short weapon such as a dagger)" [my emphasis]. "Stabs" implies a strongly physical act and an intent to seriously injure whereas "hurts" requires other words defining the act's intensity or the gravity of the wound. "Hurts" is thus less precise than "stabs" and has a greater range of potential reference.

Since "hurts" encompasses a range of action - from a blow up - we start from a provisional idea of "some hurt," working up or down its conceptual range via other words. This is why "how badly are you hurt ?" is intelligible: we require specification of effect to infer the act. And if the response is "just," "only," or "merely hurt," then the word's basic meaning is emphasised: without intensifying modifiers, the act is by definition not "serious" or "mortal." this prima facie analysis exactly accords with Shakespeare's / the playhouse's use of the words. Whenever the word "stabs" or its cognate "thrust in" is used, the person thus acted on usually dies. More importantly: in every case where "hurts" or its cognate "wounds" is used simpliciter - the result is not serious.

But "hurt" *can* intensify into an understood "stab"; thus Cornwall's "Untimely comes this hurt" (*Lear* 3.7.95-8) - which some think "clearly" means stabbed. Replying to Regan's "How look you," Cornwall reports:

> I have received a hurt. Follow me, Lady.
> Turn out that eyeless villain; throw this slave
> Upon the dunghill.

Although recognising the servant's intention to stab, Cornwall believes himself only scratched or slightly wounded. Thus he initially pays it scant attention (calling it "a" hurt), asserts normal social precedence with "Follow me, lady" and attends to other matters. But now the modifiers - "Regan, I bleed apace": when the bleeding does not stop, he not only particularises the wound as "Untimely comes *this* hurt" but feels such physical weakness that he reverses his previous "Follow me" to "Give me your arm."

Some other examples: when Romeo at 3.1.91ff voices our normal understanding of "hurt" with "courage, man, the hurt cannot be much," we immediately know that he did not grasp the significance of the obscure intensifiers "I am sped" and "marry, 'tis enough"; Mercutio must explicitly state how serious his "hurt" is. In *Othello* (2.3.155-6 and 188), Montano says "Zounds, I bleed still," before continuing with "I am hurt, to the death," and later - "I am hurt, to danger"; unstoppable bleeding and the phrases "to the death" and "to danger" intensify our understanding of "hurt."[9]

Without direct modifiers ("seriously/ mortally"), we must clarify how Hamlet "hurts" Claudius by examining two contexts. The first is the act's consequence: if serious then we infer Claudius as "stabbed"; if not then a scratch or equivalent is implied. But consequence is not sufficient since "a minor stab wound" is also "a hurt", though "stab" implies intent to cause serious injury, the consequences were minor. Claudius could evade Hamlet's intent to stab him with only a minor wound. Thus the second inquiry is crucial: does Hamlet intend to cause mortal injury by stabbing Claudius with the sword? Both inquiries place the onus of proof on critics who see Hamlet stabbing. They must present implicit or explicit evidence for Hamlet intending a sword-thrust to cause serious injury to Claudius, and/ or prove serious injury to Claudius consequent on an implied sword-thrust. Such evidence is needed since the most intense possible action, i.e. "stabs," cannot be inferred from "hurts," or indirect contextual intensifying. It would not need direct intensifyng modifiers like "seriously" or "morally," modifiers if it could. The words thus cover the following conceptual continuum:

blow / gall scratch prick gash / serious mortal

The phrase "Hurts the King" thus implies trivial actions (like "scratch" or "prick"), actions extending into some indefinite middle range. But is it a "serious" or "mortal hurt"? Since critics merely assert Hamlet stabbing Claudius, a reading prima facie untenable, I must attempt to find the modifiers they rely on. First - what are the consequences ?

"I am but hurt." In accordance with Elizabethan stage convention, Claudius describes his wound to an audience up to 100 feet away; it is minor, but a hurt *and nothing more* - which is the meaning of the elliptical "but hurt." For Claudius to say this if he is stabbed is absurd; thus Olivier in his 1948-9 film "plunged his sword into his uncle's body" - and cut "I am but hurt" entirely.[10] But cutting a text so that an action can make sense is not to perform the play as it exists. If "I am but hurt" can be cut in this way - where do we stop ? If the text does not determine the action, we have no reason to stop anywhere: we can cut or ignore anything while still claiming to perform or discuss *Hamlet*. Presumably revenge critics will construe this as a stabbed Claudius desperately attempting to deceive his court while tottering about in extremis, weakly gasping he is "but hurt," But clearly such acting must be established on other grounds. Thus the question: what words tell actors to act in this way ? As it stands, Claudius reports the wound as minor, but a hurt and nothing else; in the usual Shakespearean manner of embedding stage directions in the text, Claudius' words exemplify the Folio's stage direction both to the court - and the audience.

Nonetheless, part of the project to evade the meaning of "but hurt" argues that it implies nothing about Hamlet's action but tells us something about Claudius' state of mind. Thus T.J.B. Spencer comments that Claudius is "perhaps . . . intended to suppose the poison on the sword-point has been used up on Hamlet and Laertes."[11] Or another query about Claudius' line: "is he lying ? demonstrating a faulty memory ? confused ?" There is no textual basis for this word-spinning. The principle to be adopted is Ockham's razor: prefer theories making less assumptions than others. Compare Claudius construing Gertrude's dying as a swoon (line 389): to ask of this "is he confused ? demonstrating a faulty memory ? intended to suppose the poison has lost its potency ?" demonstrates the fatuity of such questions. He publicly construes Gertrude as fainting so as to "keep up appearances and to cover the cause of the Queen's collapse. Knowing that the Queen, Laertes and Hamlet will soon be dead he can still hope to escape exposure" *[Spencer, loc cit]*. Likewise here. With a deft use of suppressio veri, Claudius implicitly denies that the sword is poisoned by asserting (and probably showing) the triviality of the actual wound. He thus evades difficult questions as to why the sword is poisoned, questions which would probe the reality of his habitual facade.

To return: Olivier's production indicates the problem this line poses. As cutting is unacceptable, productions where Hamlet stabs thus *add* action so that Claudius being "but hurt" makes sense; Hamlet shows, by his vigor and ferocity, an intention to stab - but Claudius evades with but a small hurt. Thus Hamlet's intention either intensifies *or* (as I am about to argue) qualifies how we understand "hurt." What does Hamlet intend ?

Before he acts, Hamlet says "The point envenomed too ?/ Then, venom, to thy work." As David Bradley notes: "the meaning of the words is that Hamlet expects the poison and not the point to do his business."[12] As he later clarifies - Hamlet does not use the sword to stab Claudius, mortally "aiming for the heart," but uses the sword-point to poison him. How we know this requires first asking what act defines how deadly the poison is. At 4.7.142ff, Laertes characterised the poison as "So mortal that . . . / Where it draws blood, no cataplasm so rare, / . . . can save the thing from death/ That is but scratched withal. I'll touch my point/ With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,/ It may be death." The act defining the poison's deadliness is a scratch or a slight gall. To object here that "Laertes telling Claudius that a scratch would be fatal cannot in any way determine whether Hamlet would choose to scratch rather than stab Claudius" is irrelevant. *Why* Hamlet scratches Claudius is another question entirely; all I am arguing here is that Laertes' description of the poison's deadliness *does* precisely define Hamlet's knowledge. For if Laertes has to tell Hamlet ". . . thou art slain./ No medicine in the world can do thee good. / In thee there is not half an hour's life" then we know that Hamlet cannot have known that his wound was mortal, i.e. Laertes has in fact scratched or galled Hamlet. Thus Hamlet knows a wound kills - since a wound that draws blood is killing both Laertes and himself. Another objection - "all the text *defines* is the need to draw blood: it says nothing of *how*" - is just wrong: the text tells us Hamlet "Hurts the King," an action causing but a hurt and nothing else. The question is - do any words allow us to understand "hurt" as a revenge stab ?

We can construe Hamlet's "The point envenomed too" in three ways: (1) as a quiet recongnition that the point is envenomed (like the cup and/ or as well as being sharp) - thus "The point envenomed too; then venom, etc"; (2) as an exclamation of discovery that the point is, like the cup, also envenomed or that the point is not only sharp (which he knows from his own bleeding) but also envenomed - thus "The point envenomed too !" (or per Staunton: "The point - envenomed too !"; although both constructions are equally possible since we do not have enough evidence to determine either way, it is not important what the point is being compared to); or (3) that he implicitly asks Laertes to confirm his previous claim - thus "The point envenomed too ?" However, irrespective of quiet, exclamatory or interrogative tone of voice, the meaning is the same: Hamlet's attention is focussed by a venom which kills even with a scratch on the merest point of the sword.[13] Where does this lead? We know the poison only needs drawing blood to work; we know Hamlet knows this; and we also know Hamlet intends *the poison* to work. This not only does not support the critical claim that Hamlet stabs Claudius - it denies it. For if Hamlet intends the poison to work then he does not intend to use the sword to mortally injure - why say "Then, venom, to thy work" if he did ? So Hamlet stabbing Claudius not only exceeds the text (since it is not an inference from "Hurts the King," Claudius' words nor Hamlet's words) but it also contradicts the text: it is a hurt, it is just a hurt and it is the venom which is to work, not a sword. So much for Hamlet stabbing.

Before discussing Hamlet's offer of the cup, revenge critics need to explain the court's response to Hamlet's "Treason" and Claudius asking them to "O yet defend me, friends."[14] One class of "explanation" is theatrical: the court's defence of the King is carefully made ineffectual. Two interpretations are instanced by Sprague: in Tom Taylor's 1873 prompt book, on Claudius' cry the Lords

> form round the King, and draw to repel Hamlet. He, after a moment's pause, rushes on the King again, followed by Horatio, who, trussing his mantle round his left arm, takes the left-hand blows on it, guarding Hamlet with his right from the swords of the Lords on that side.

A real battle at last ! On the other hand . . . in the Mounet-Sully version of 1894: "Hamlet s'elance sur le roi; qulques-uns des seigneurs s'avancent pour l'arreter, mais reculent devant l'epee empoinsonnee." Fear of the poisoned rapier explains in an instant why Claudius found no one to defend him.[15]

A critical idea is also implicitly theatrical: A.C. Bradley sees Hamlet as "an omnipotent fate, before whom all the court stands helpless." His Hamlet acts so quickly - "drives his foil right through his body, then seizing the poisoned cup and forcing it violently between the wretched man's lips"[16] - that the court has no time to react. Bradley's action is thus simultaneous rather than sequential; whilst the court cries "Treason ! Treason !" and Claudius abjures them, Hamlet attacks with a cup.

These "explanations" make unacceptable assumptions. If the court defends the King then Hamlet, even with Horatio as pin-cushion defender, cannot fight his way (cup in one hand) through a multitude of swords. For even the foppish Osric must be a competent fencer since he is judge of the fencing match. And Claudius proposing fencing as an entertainment presupposes Osric as characteristic of the court as a whole; you cannot appreciate what you do not understand. As for the second construction: why is the court more terrified of a death-dealing point than a death-dealing sword ? If the court would defend the King against a sword they would defend against a poisoned sword; there is no functional difference - both kill. These readings *assume* either an incompetent or a cowardly court: neither are normal assumptions, neither have textual authority - and one (as usual) contradicts the text.

Bradley's "simultaneity" is likewise not only non-textual but also contradictory. Not only does Hamlet grabbing the cup and turning back to Claudius allow more than enough time for the court to defend Claudius - the main problem is the usual one: it contradicts the text. For Claudius' "O yet defend me, friends" has the substantive meaning of "O continue to still defend me": the court defends Claudius and something raises the possibility of that defence not continuing. That "something" is probably Hamlet dropping the sword, no longer threatening to attack. But if Claudius exhorts the court to continue defending him not only is Bradley's reading nonsense but also the revenge thesis generally: for if the court defends Claudius, how can Hamlet kill him ?

What modern critics say, therefore, is that they do not defend Claudius but look on, acting as "mutes or audience to this act" (5.2.336). Claudius' "O yet defend me" is thus apparently construed as "O before all is over [OED 11.591]/ in spite of [Laertes's accusation: an elision: OED 111.91] defend me." Note that reading "yet" thus still destroys Bradley's action since Claudius does not understand the court as "helpless" nor that Hamlet acts so quickly they cannot react. If the court does nothing then his words must be prompted by the *dramatic* obviousness of their failure to defend him - which requires time to show itself. Presumably, therefore, these textual readings back Barker's "perfunctory" court who "do nothing" (supra). So - why "perfunctory"? Spencer voices the idea behind their reluctance: "Laertes . . . give[s] the first public evidence of the King's guilt" *[op cit, p. 356]*; the court merely goes through the verbal motions of defending Claudius because they believe him guilty. Of course, one must query the competence of a dramatist who indicates the court's belief in Claudius' guilt with a cry accusing Hamlet of "Treason ! Treason." But , it may be protested, this is only a "minor" anomaly: this reading *almost* covers the text and, since Hamlet must revenge, therefore the court "must" act at ironic variance with their words.

The fact is that critics have no textual evidence for the court believing Laertes's accusation against Claudius. Critics have the court believing Laertes because *they* believe Laertes - and since they *must* have the court believing Laertes (otherwise *their* revenge theory has impossible/problems) - why then: it must be so. Two points: first, if the court believes Laertes then at least some of them would have said so - this is elementary dramatic competence. A court or character are only linguistic constructs and the only evidence we have for any of their thoughts or actions is what is in/ implied by the text. This is elementary criticism. And second: what court believes the accusation of ordinary people against police ? Such modern deference to position was explicit in medieval rank distinction: Sigismund II of Hungary saw a Parlement of Paris rule against a plebian plaintiff because he was no knight while his opponent was - a ground Sigismund destroyed by immediately knighting the dumbfounded plebian.[17] Thus Edgar's concern to establish such equality when challenging Edmund (*Lear* 5.3.122ff); Edmund need not answer unless his challenger is as noble as himself. Thus Isabella's difficulty in accusing Angelo: who believes her ? who, other than the privileged audience or friar Duke, would believe her ? Angelo explicitly relies on this:

> Who will believe thee, Isabella ?
> My unsoiled name, th'austereness of my life,
> My vouch against you, and my place i'th'state,
> Will so your accusation overweigh,
> That you shall stifle in your own report,
> And smell of calumny.
>
> (*MM* 2.4.154-9)

What court will believe a former rebel, son of a minor noble - against the King of Denmark ? Laertes is just not a witness in good standing; the accuser must be equal or superior to the accused, a statement probable on historical and, behind the history, psycho-social grounds. His statement is a "calumny" precisely because he makes it: only those with privileged information, such as Hamlet or the audience, believe him. So, even allowing the contradiction between an *assumed* deliberate failure to defend the King and an explicit *textual* recognition of Hamlet's "Treason," the court not defending Claudius because they believe him guilty is improbable. And if a court not defending their king is a strained reading of "O yet defend me," is an improbable expectation, and is an impossible construction of "Treason ! Treason !" - then the revenge action of Hamlet attacking with a cup is also strained to the point of impossibility. But Hamlet "must" successfully attack with the cup -

therefore, despite textual and psycho-social probability the court must deliberately not defend the king.

The small still voice of truth is rather more elegant than this nonsense. For the lack of textually indicated action *is* significant. As Sherlock Holmes noted about "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time":

> "The dog did nothing in the night-time."
> "That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.[18]

The court's recognition of Hamlet's treason implies them defending Claudius from further attack and further treason: such action suits the word. Thus Claudius, behind his rampart of men, watches Hamlet drop the sword - continue to defend me, he cries (it's a trick) - take the cup, and offer it. For Hamlet knows the situation: only one person equals the King's status; only one person's accusation of Claudius will be believed; only one person can truly judge Claudius - Claudius himself. Thus Hamlet offers the cup of Claudius's past sins; and thus, though the king commands all external power - what defends Claudius from his own self-accusing conscience ? The court stands at guard, symbol of all earthly power - and *silently* impotent to defend Claudius against no thing, the small still voice of a conscience caught by Hamlet's action. The court can do nothing when no one attacks - and can do nothing when Claudius reaches for the cup and drinks: all they can be is "audience to this act."

To indicate why Claudius takes the cup requires explaining how Hamlet catches his conscience - which involves discussing the symbolism of offering a cup via the quadruple pun on a union in a chalice (poison/ marriage/ soul/ Christ) and I Cor.11:24-32, Paul's rationale of the communion.[19] Why Claudius takes the cup also requires discussing why Hamlet offers it rather than revenging with a sword. But since *Hamlet* is about why Hamlet does not revenge, this involves analysing the entire play ! To return to something less discursive: I can see four arguments for Hamlet forcing the cup on the King. The first appeals to the "off" of "Drink off this potion"; the second I call "the derogatory ambience theory" - that Hamlet is contemptuous of Claudius when he says "thou incestuous murd'rous damned Dane"; the third appeals to the imperative "Drink this potion !" The argument against this last breaks into three parts - first, a consideration of "Here"; second, a discussion of "Drink" and the imperative; third, a note on "served." The fourth argument for Hamlet forcing the cup on Claudius enters uncomfortable meta-critical waters - "what I believe must be so," the argument of last resort whenever the revenge action needs to contradict or ignore the text. Though constantly referred to, I will consider it separately.

In George Ryland's Argo version of the play,[20] Anthony White speaks Hamlet's lines thus: "Here . . . / Drink *OFF* this potion." His emphasis on "off" highlights a word I presume revenge critics would cite as evidence for the revenge action. And yet - to anticipate and summarise the ensuing argument - the Folio's word "off" has been preferred to the alternative Q2's "of" precisely because it fits the revenge action required by the revenge interpretation of the play as a whole. The consequence of this rather obvious observation is that neither "off" nor "of" is evidence for any wider reading until that wider reading is itself established as the only reasonably valid controlling context. Note, however, that the phrase "wider reading" is not equivalent to "the widest possible reading" i.e. some over-all view of the play, but should be understood very clearly as a continuum, appliyng not only to the play as a whole but to lesser conceptual contexts. It is not good editorial or critical behaviour, for example, to choose one reading (say, "off") because it fits an over-all view of the play if a lesser conceptual context (as, for example, the words immediately surrounding the word) is contradicted. This, however, is precisely what editors have done. And so into the argument.

The complete editorial and critical silence about editoral choice of Folio's "off" is remarkable.[21] Even Jenkins who rigorously objects to the Folio version chose Folio's "off" without a single editorial comment - "Here . . .", says Jenkins' Hamlet, "Drink off this potion." For an editor who elsewhere insists on Q2's "priority" this is very odd since Q2 has "Drink *of* this potion." But, it may be objected, "Jenkins' note on line 333 [sic: 331] implicitly makes perfectly clear *his* reason for preferring 'off' - it fits his interpretation, just as 'of' does [mine]." Since this confuses two senses of the word "interpretation," re-surfacing in another form later, I will discus this problem here and return to it at the end. Isabel Hungerland has discussed "interpretation" thus:

> The distinction between what we can intersubjectively agree upon as a given poem and alternative interpretation of it cannot be absolute, since there is mutual modification between organising viewpoint and determination of the constituents of a poem. Thus, whether a given phrase is ironic, whether all the various meanings of an ambiguous word are relevant to a poem, will depend on how we view the whole; but our view of the whole is not created out of nothing. Our view of the whole must be based on our accurate apprehension of certain written or spoken words and their meanings - otherwise our interpretation will not be of the entire poem in question.[22]

The word "interpretation" thus refers to two actions: the first - tactical - discusses particular words; the second - strategic - discusses themes, grouping words into categories which are themselves discussed. But the test of general or strategic propositions about a text is *always* the tactical discussion: how well and in what way are they anchored in the text's words ? For if our paraphrase exceeds what the text's words allow us to say then our strategic "organising viewpoint" is probably wrong. Consider now Jenkins' line note.

> *Drink off this potion* Objection has been made to Hamlet forcing the liquor on the King. But death from the cup as well as the sword is necessary so that (1) treachery falls on the inventor's head; (2) the King is punished for the Queen he has destroyed by being joined with her in death.

It is surely obvious: Jenkins is not establishing Hamlet's action but is *valuing* an act already assumed; he is not examining the text's words but merely asserting that Hamlet forcing Claudius to drink is *thematically* more cogent that Hamlet offering the cup. A.J.A. Waldock commented on such behaviour that:

> Unfortunately it is not of the slightest consequence how very reasonably all such considerations are urged, if the play does not urge them. We may argue with all the logic in the world that the matter must have been thus and thus, but if the play remains silent we are where we were.[23]

Returning to "off" versus "of": editors believe with Parrott and Craig that "Folio modernises "off" *which the sense requires*"[24]: [my emphasis]. But if they must appeal to sense in choosing "off" over "of" and if the sense is Hamlet forcing Claudius to drink *all* the potion - why have they given no reason for seeing this ? When the play's two sources conflict an editor *must* weigh the arguments; thus Jenkins discusses his choice of the Folio's "difpriz'd" over Q2's "defpiz'd" at 3.1.72 or Folio's "inurn'd" over Q2's "interr'd" at 1.5.49. He knows what to do - except with "off/ of" where the same problem of justifying choice occurs: but here, "intuitively knowing" the correct sense, he felt no need to explain how he knew it. We must begin, therefore, by discussing the word; thus the OED:

> Originally the same word as *of . . . off* being at first a variant spelling which was gradually appropriated to the form . . . while *of* as retained in the transferred and weakened senses . . . . *off* appears causally from c 1400, but *off* and *of* were not completely differentiated till after 1600.

The 1604-5 Q2 does not so differentiate: "of" occurs for "off" at 1.1.40 "Peace, breake thee of" [and some Folio copies]; 1.5.80 2.2.299; 3.4.43; 5.2.258 while "off" is used at 1.5.76; 3.2.255; 5.2.251 and 265; 5.2.25. Such a 50-50 split is not compositorial error but usage. In comparison Folio does differentiate as later proof correction of 1.1.40 indicates. But this still allows no conclusion. Given the variables - Q2's compositor may have translated Shakespeare's "off" into his own usage; it may be a mistake; it may accurately copy "foul papers"; perhaps the Folio scribe "modernised" Shakespeare's "of" to what he thought was the meaning; the compositor ditto with accurate scribal copy; the scribe may have accurately copied the word; it may be a compositorial error - given all this, we cannot bibliographically determine the correct form. Thus the appeal to "sense": the meaning of surrounding words and consequent action determines the form.

How do the forms differ and therefore what actions do they fit ? The OED defines "off" thus: "So as to exhaust or finish; to leave none; to the end; entirely, completely, to the finish; as to . . . *drink off*." On the strong assumption that Q2's "of" for both "of" and "off" reflects a Shakespearean form and given the stereotype "drink off," note how easily a modernising Folio scribe or compositor could read a Shakespearean "of" as "off." Given the regularising tendency, the stereotype probably determined the form since neither were concerned with wider coherent meaning. Which is exactly the problem: if Hamlet forces Claudius to drink all the poison - how can Horatio later say "Here's yet some liquor left" (1.343) ? The OED defines "some" as - " a certain (unspecified) amount . . . frequently implying 'not little, considerable'": the word is an indefinite usually excluding the least possible. Horatio's comment thus contradicts the revenge reading of Hamlet forcing Claudius to drink *all* the potion. So why not just say that the line *is* "Drink of this potion" - which means per OED 7 "Drink from this potion" - thus allowing some liquor to be left ? Since "of" does not direct how much is drunk, Hamlet can force Claudius to drink/ Claudius can obey Hamlet's command to drink - and still leave "some." Why then do editors still prefer "off" despite the discrepancy between meaning and result ? Because "of" does not allow a physically compelling *tone:* how can Hamlet be seen to force Claudius to drink if the person allegedly forced determines the amount drunk? Since this action and the word "of" are discrepant, all critics/ editors prefer "off" because "off" denies volition, connotatively expressing Hamlet's absolute power over Claudius: determining how much is drunk fits Hamlet forcing Claudius to drink. The revenge theory needs this connotation so desperately that a usual textual obliviousness occurs; Hamlet forces Claudius to drink "off" all the potion - and leaves some.

Where does this discussion leave us ? It is not vital to my over-all reading of the action whether the word is "off" or "of"; Hamlet can still request Claudius to drink "off" the potion and Claudius could decide to drink most of it if not all. The amount drunk is irrelevant since death results from either. But it is absolutely vital to the revenge reading that the word is not "of"; a physically imperative revenge action can surround "off" in a way "of" makes extremely difficult. But "of" can be determined as the correct reading on simple grounds of coherent micro-textual meaning without reference to any implicit complex hypothesis, either the revenge reading or my "merciful" reading (Ockham's razor again). So while critics continue hammering the square peg of the revenge action into this particular textual round hole - let us hold the choice of words in suspension (with some indefinite preference for "of") and discuss how we can know whether Hamlet forces Claudius to drink or whether he offers Claudius the cup. First, however, I will consider an interestingly ambivalent phrase.

"thou incestuous, murd'rous damned Dane." Do these words express a contemptuous attitude to Claudius congruent with forcing him to drink ? This question references both tonal questions and, behind them thematic questions - is Hamlet Claudius' enemy at the end or not, and if not, why not - which I can only hint at. My intention here is to deny the words any determining validity for either my interpretation or the revenge theory. First, "thou" - which S.S. Hussey discusses thus;

> [In] the early Middle English period, there are four unambiguous forms: *thou* (nominative singular), *thee* (accusative singular), *ye* (nominative plural) and *you* (accusative plural). . . . From the mid-thirteenth century, and perhaps (like much else in Middle English) influenced by French practice, *ye* and *you* . . . began to be used as a mark of respect in the *singular* when addressing a person regarded as one's superior . . . . [spreading] to include equals as well as superiors . . . [B]y contrast, *thou* and *thee* were increasingly employed to inferiors - a master talking to his apprentice, say, or an older man to a very much younger one. It could also be deliberately insulting: Sir Toby teaches Sir Andrew how to pick a quarrel:
>
> > Taunt him with the licence of ink. If thou 'thou'-est him some thrice it shall not be amiss. (*TN* III.ii 442-3)

Thou / thee could also indicate familiarity, from parent to child or between close friends. If it is asked how two almost opposite attitudes"- insult or affection - could co-exist, the answer is that they never occur within the same context. More and more, thou or thee was becoming a marked (unexpected) form, used in implied contrast to an unmarked (usual, expected) form, *ye* and *you*.[25]

So - an "either / or" choice: critics assume Hamlet's "thou" insultingly denotes Claudius as a moral inferior; I hear the form as familiar. Why ?

because the context of "thou" points back into the play. "Thou" is thought derogatory because "incestuous, murd'rous damned Dane" allegedly defines Hamlet's moral superiority. So - "murd'rous" is derogatory, is it ? a word indicating Hamlet's moral superiority to Claudius ? And the play's greatest murderer is - who ? For, if we did not appreciate that Polonius' murder makes Hamlet morally equal to Claudius, Shakespeare has him kill Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; although killing his former friends is not naturalistically probable, Hamlet is a greater murderer than Claudius because it thematically reinforces the idea of Hamlet as a murderer. That Shakespeare puts thematic consideration before consistent characterisation characterises the tradition he works out of - the morality play: but this requires too much discussion. It is enough to say that from the moment he kills Polonius, Hamlet not only knows he is not morally superior to Claudius but feels it: "For this same lord/ I do repent . . ." "I . . . will answer well/ The death I gave him" (3.4.173-8). The words "murd'/rous and "damned" are contextually inept insults since they apply to himself as well. So, even on the basis of what other critics and myself would agree occurs in the play,[26] a derogatory tone is out of place. Thus the simplest reading: as descriptions of Claudius's actions, they prompt memory of past action; he has committed incest (the epitome of lust), he has committed murder and consequently he is damned (unless he judges himself).

The judicial even-handedness of the words are emphasised by Hamlet calling Claudius "Dane." Claudius calls himself "the Dane" at 1.2.44; a synecdoche for "the Danish King," it does not refer to that here - "thou" makes it personal: what kind of personal, derogatory or familiar ? In contrast to all the names Hamlet gives Claudius up to his calling Claudius "mother" - "serpent"; "Bloody bawdy villain/ Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous kindless villain"; "a slave"; "a vice of kings/ a cutpurse of the empire . . . A King of shreds and patches"; a paddock, bat, gib - "Dane" allows Claudius a humanity his previous names deny. He is no longer an animal, a less than human villain, slave or thing; "Dane" is a synecdoche for a human being in and of a certain society.

Thus two observation about "Dane." The first is its moral neutrality: neither good nor bad, it contrasts "incestuous, murd'/rous damned." If Hamlet had used a name prevously given Claudius - "villain [cf. Q1] - this contrast would not exist. "Dane" implicitly distinguishes between Claudius the man and what he has done - incest, murder - actions which damn him; it is a typical theological distinction.[27] Compare Hamlet's previous attitude: Claudius is equated with what he has done, treated as unhuman because his acts have been inhuman. Thus Hamlet's previous names for Claudius have been reductive: Claudius has committed murder > murderer > inhuman > animal/slave/villain - he is a thing on which Hamlet can act. "Dane" opposes this logic. And the second point about "Dane": he is a Dane - just like

"Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.259); the other who is like oneself. Thus the words distinguish between acts which can be judged and condemned, and the act-er - a man is not what he has done, is not a non-human murderer even if he has committed murder; and these same words express a similarity between Hamlet and Claudius - both have experienced lust, both have committed murder. The play creates a context for "incestuous murd'rous damned Dane" which denies a derogatory ambience - indeed, precisely the reverse. Having performed the same acts, both Hamlet and Claudius are equally in danger of imminent death and consequent judgement: "thou" is thus intimately familiar.

Another bibliographical problem. Since the play's two substantive texts again disagree on the word I now wish to discuss, I must address the question of just what the text is. Even if the results are negative - as I think they are - some discussion is necessary. The Folio version of these lines is "*Heere* thou incestuous, murdrous, damned Dane,/Drinke off this potion."; Q2 has "*Heare* thou incestious damned Dane,/ Drinke of this potion." These are not alternative spellings of the same word: in both Folio and Q2 "heere" invariably marks our modern "here" and "heare" our modern "hear." I said "invariably" - and yet Folio contains one and Q2 two instances of the forms used incorrectly, exceptions indicating the circumstances in which they could be confused. First, Folio 1.5.151: "Come one you here this fellow in the selleredge." The simplest explanation of this is dropout - the compositor understood "hear" = his version "heare" and forgot to set the "a." The alternative, and one explaining that curious "one," is that he understood something like "come one [of] you here, this fellow in the cellarage, etc" and set accordingly. Turning to Q2: 1.3.4 "But let me heere from you" is more likely to be the common "e" for "a" misreading. The other example - 5.2.241-3 "what I have done/ . . . I heare proclame was madnesse" - could also be a "e" for "a" misreading. But, understanding "proclame" to describe what others have "proclaimed" about Hamlet's madness, Q2's compositor may have deliberately set "heare." However semantically and grammatically correct the phrase as excerpted is, editors believe it wrong because it does not fit Hamlet's surrounding sentences.

How does all this relate to "Heere/ heare thou incestuous murd'rous damned Dane"? Although positing an "e" for "a" substitution is the simplest explanation, it assumes that the correst graphic form is already known. But this is *only* valid by appealing to meaning - which is a problem. *On any grammatical or semantic ground, Q2's construction makes perfect sense*. The possibility exists that Q2's compositor could thus have actually read "Hear thou incestuous damned Dane,/ Drink of this potion" and conversely that Folio's compositors misread the graphic form (rather than, as editors assume, vice versa). In other words, Shakespeare could have written

"Heare" so as to express Hamlet enjoining Claudius to "Hear me": an ellipsis: compare Lear "Hear me; recreant; / On thy allegiance hear me !" (1.1.166-7); pay attention to what I am about to *say* - which is an injunction to drink the potion. This perfectly understands what an imperative is - but is totally unacceptable to revenge critics because they understand the imperative to imply physical force. For my part, Q2's construction fits what I see Hamlet as doing: holding out a cup, speaking (threatening, commanding, advising) - and nothing else.

So - if the word is "Hear," the revenge theory once again has problems and I could accordingly discuss the next word. But there are three reasons to prefer "Here." The first is dramatic economy: unlike Lear who must demand Kent's attention precisely becaue he is not listening, Hamlet has no need to abjure a hearing since, for obvious reasons, both the court and Claudius are already paying him a fascinated attention. The second is conceptual: OED sense 8 of "here" (cited below) already incorporates the directive sense of "hear me/pay attention." The third is explicitness: what is implied in an injunction to "Hear . . . / Drink . . . this" is explicit in an injunction to "Here ../Drink . . . this". But first I will discuss what actors have done with the phrase by considering an interpretative principle useful not only for this word but also later.

We understand meaning in two ways - via the conceptual content of a sentence or in the performance of an utterance (tone, stress, etc.) In normal linguistic practice, understanding is seamless; what is said and how it is said form a particular meaning intuitively understood. But, in analysing a play's text, we cannot appeal to performance, to how a sentence *could* be spoken nor to what actions we *could* surround it with. We must first become aware of the word's range of meaning which then determines the probability of surrounding tone or action. Thus, we would not normally expect a tone of hostility to surround "I love you" since the phrase in itself contradicts that tone. But both actors and critics have disregarded this basic interpretative principle for some centuries. Ignoring the conceptual meaning of "Here . . . do this" is essential to Hamlet forcing the cup on Claudius. John Gielgud exemplifies this discrepancy between the meaning of "Here . . . / Drink . . . this" and the revengeful actions seen to surround it when he thinks that

> the lines "Drink off this potion. Is thy union here ? Follow my mother" are always a bit funny . I think you must do it qute cold-bloodedly and quite *slowly* . . . . After you stab him . . . then you take him by the throat, force him back and *slowly* pour the thing down his throat.[28]

Gielgud's recognition that the lines "are always a bit funny" is interesting; it indicates an intuitive linguistic awareness by a first rate actor of how an actor must strain the words to achieve the revenge action. His direction to Burton (in my opinion, the best way of suppressing the words' conceptual content) implies speaking the first line faster than the second - otherwise we cannot hear "Drink off this potion" spoken "quite slowly." If the long first line is run together - "Herethouincestuousmurd'rousdamnedDane" - a satisfactorily urgent and imperative sense is conveyed; the delivery (and not the conceptual content) thus conveys meaning. Slurring "Here" both allows "Here" to be ignored and emphasises the presumed insults of "thou incestuous murd'rous damned Dane." And changing the next phrase's speed - "Drink *off* this potion!" - disconnects it from what went before. Since "Drink off this potion!" is imperative - i.e. "You will drink whatever you wish to do" (lacking discussion, I assume critics understand the imperative thus) - slowing the delivery allows listeners time to recognise the meaning. It thus *semantically* reinforces the compellingly imperative and emphatic *voice* that has gone before: meaning reinforces performance. Accounting for "off" [but see previous discussion], the meaning is then "whatever you wish to do, you will drink all the potion," a meaning almost embodied by surrounding action - Hamlet both forcing Claudius to drink and deciding how much Claudius does drink. But although Gielgud's phrasing matches the revenge action, it exemplifies how performance can overbear conceptual content with no sense of discrepancy. The giveaway is his memory of the line as "Drink off this potion": it is actually "*Here* . . . Drink . . . this." The OED discusses "here" thus:

> 1. In this place; in the place where the person speaking is, or places himself.
> 2. In a weakened sense more or less directly indicating something present to the sight or mind. Chiefly with the verb *to be* (sometimes with ellipsis). *Here is* calls attention to what the speaker has, brings, offers or discovers = there is here, see or behold here.
> 8. Used elliptically in calling an attendant, etc. (Cf. Goth. *Hiri !* Come here !) Hence, to call attention to, or introduce a command.

Apart from stressing sense 8 previously discussed under "Hear," another way to discuss this would compare "here " and "there": "there" is the usual indicator of completed action. When Sir Andrew says "There's for you !" (*TN* 4.1.24), editors immediately understand that he has struck/is striking Sebastian even though no stage direction exists. And Ophelia's "There, my lord" (3.1.102) implies that she has/is physically thrusting Hamlet's remembrances into his hands despite his previous refusal to take them: the remembrances have gone/are going from "here" (with Ophelia) to "there" (with Hamlet). This comparison clarifies what we all know about the set of imperative statements "Here, hold this/here, take this/here, eat this/ Here, drink this potion"; however imperatively required, an act is conditional on the hearer coming "here" where the speaker is (sense 1 and 8), or having their attention drawn to something "here" which the speaker has, brings or offers (sense 2). Thus Gertrude's "Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows" (5.2.289) does not imply her physically thrusting the napkin into Hamlet's hands: catching his attention, she holds it out and waits for him to come "here" to take it. That Hamlet's "Here . . . drink" likewise means "Come here to drink" is supported by our only witness to the original Elizabethan production - Q1. A text apparently based on an actor's memory of his own part, actual production ("Enter ghost in his night gown") and invention, Q1 is of limited use - but it usefully elucidates both Q2 and Folio now: "Come drink, here lies thy union here." Just as Q1 particularises production details (the night gown; Ophelia playing on a lute, hair down; swapping rapiers, etc.) so it adds words particularising the action seen: "Come drink, here." What is elliptical in *Hamlet's* texts is explicit in Q1.

So: Hamlet does not force the cup on Claudius but holds it out - "Here [come here to take it/here it is - attend to what is required of you] . . . / Drink . . . . this potion." "Here" like "Drink" is an imperative - Hamlet requires Claudius to first come from where he is to where Hamlet is.[29] But identifying "here" as an imperative may confuse: let us therefore explicitly examine the imperative by considering what Hamlet requires of Claudius; he must.

> "Drink" - which the OED defines as:
> 1.1 To take (liquid) into the stomach; to swallow down, imbibe, quaff.
> 6.To swallow down the contents of (a cup or vessel). Also with *off, up,* indicating completeness. Fig. to drink the cup, or chalice, of joy, sorrow, suffering, etc.

To "drink" is to "swallow", an action which a person does, not what is or can be done to him; the common sense "You can take an ass to water but you can't make it drink" understands this perfectly. But critics understandably find this restrictive - and so, impatient with mere common sense, they create a sense to fit their belief:

> a. [used only in *Hamlet* criticism] For Hamlet to pour liquid down Claudius' throat without needing him to swallow: to treat the throat as a pipe.
>
> 1904 Bradley, *Shakespearian Tragedy* 81 "[Hamlet] seizes the poisoned cup and forces it violently between the wretched man's lips."

> 1936 H.Granville Barker *Prefaces to Shak.* "Hamlet...takes the cup and drags the creature out, and - as one would medicine a dog - chokes his mouth open and pours the poison down."
>
> 1967 Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge* 235 "[Hamlet] is enraged and savage as he forces the poisoned drink between the king's lips."

This definition raises a fascinating linguistic problem: when a group of people use a word to mean something then it means that something. The question, however, is not how critics use "drink" but whether the conditions for that use have been created by the text they refer to.

The place to start is with the revenge action's obvious problem - it is impossible; a man *cannot* be forced to drink/swallow. Critical use of the word does not therefore reference reality; it is not a physically possible action in the real world. Denying the revenge action's denotative reality thus requires critics arguing otherwise. Since in all literature "Drink" has never been used to mean one character physically forcing another to "drink" - critics must appeal directly to the proposition that a language user can create meaning,. What they want to say, then, is that the meaning of "drink" *they* create is what Shakespeare intended to create. The argument is ancient; thus Aristotle in his *Poetics* [30]:

> Speaking generally, one has to justify the Impossible by reference to the requirements of poetry, or to the better, or to opinion. For the purposes of poetry a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility.

Reality and usage is thus irrelevant: since the action can be made convincing, questions of probability - of Hamlet forcing the cup on the King and then forcing him to swallow - do not enter our minds when we watch the play. We accept "Drink . . . this potion" as a dramatic metaphor not ruled by reality. As Albany says: "All friends shall taste/The wages of their virtue, and all foes/ The cup of their deservings." (*Lear* 5.3.3-1-3) - which is what, critics want to say, occurs in *Hamlet*; Claudius is physically forced to taste the cup of his deservings. For analytical purposes, I will separate three strands of this argument: (1) that dramatic metaphor and verbal metaphor are the same - thus the belief that verbal metaphors of drinking support Hamlet forcing Claudius to drink; (2) that we pass over the unbelievable in the skill of the performance; (3) that the imperative *can and must* imply Hamlet physically forcing Claudius. The argument against this begins by stressing, per Aristotle, the fundamental difference between poetic and dramatic metaphor.

> [Poetry] affords more opening for the improbable . . . because in it the agents are not visibly before one. The pursuit of Hector would be ridiculous on the stage - the Greeks halting instead of pursuing him, and Achilles shaking his head to stop them; but in a poem the absurdity is overlooked. [*24.1460a.13-17*]

If we could ask Albany how all foes shall be forced to taste the cup of their deservings - he would reply that the phrase is not denotative but figurative; they will be executed (by hanging, beheading, etc.), imprisoned, fined, exiled or whatever. The first point to make, then, is that if Hamlet forcing Claudius to drink is objectively impossible then it is a dramatic action performed with thematic and not "reality" reference - it is figurative. To distinguish per Edwards' New Cambridge between a majority "denotative" and a minority "figurative" revenge reading is thus wrong: "[s] ome commentators (including Capell and Kittredge) think this is figurative, and that 'this potion' is a second sword-stab" (op cit, p. 239, line note on *Drink off this potion*). But if *any* revenge reading of "drink" is figurative we immediately realise that revenge critics cannot determine exactly how Hamlet kills Claudius ! Consider Hall's 1965 production where "Hamlet nicked the King in the neck with terrifying ease, then stabbed him [! why nick if he is going to stab?], and, as he fell, butted him with his knee, finally sloshing the poisoned drink into his ear as Claudius had done Hamlet's father."[31] Sloshing the poisoned drink into Claudius' ear is as valid as forcing Claudius to drink because both treat "drink" figuratively. But now the question; where and how do we stop ? Since "drink" can figuratively stand for an indefinite number of actions - what controls our understanding of what the action is ? I would suggest that before treating "drink" figuratively, defining the action it stands for solely with reference to some high-level revenge theory, we must first examine the simplest interepretation, that it *is* denotative. This involves further questions; why does Hamlet allow Claudius to drink ? what is so "just" about serving Claudius this cup (as Laertes notes) rather than just killing him ? how does the play explore the problems of judgment and retributive justice ?

Let us now turn to questions which involve the problem of acting, the objection that "this analysis of 'drink' must fail to persuade in the face of the many performances we have all seen where actors have made the unbelievable believable." But that actors make the unbelievable believable is not critical evidence: that is their job, a basic condition of their craft. The real question is - *how do they act and what tells them to act like this* ? If "drink" is treated metaphorically no word tells them to act in any particular way at all. But now my argument takes issue with other actions required to make *any* killing of Claudius dramatically acceptable. In terms of macro-contextual theme, the

Claudius thus appears a necessary or probable consequence of what has gone before. For reasons of space, I cannot argue against that here. In terms of the eight line micro-context I am discussing, actors do two things: first, Claudius is made to appear extremely weak consequent on being stabbed; second, Hamlet acts in a *physically* imperative way. But what textual authority is there for Claudius being weak ? and what textual authority is there for Hamlet acting physically ? None: nothing in the text implies Claudius as weak; nothing in the meaning of Hamlet's sentences requires him to act. In other words, Shakespeare has not textually set up conditions allowing such acting. Let us consider these propositions.

To make Hamlet attacking with a cup a dramatically acceptable action, not only must the court not defend their King but Claudius must also not defend himself. Since the normal expectation is that Claudius would defend himself, some reason must exist for him not doing so; Claudius must therefore be construed as stabbed. There is no question about this if the original assumption is the base: apart from productions where Hamlet offers the cup [32] or which cut Hamlet forcing the cup on Claudius entirely, all revenge productions of *Hamlet* have Claudius tottering about the stage, weakly unable to prevent Hamlet attacking with the cup because of, or oblivious to everything but, his stab-wound. By defusing our normal expectation that he will defend himself, stabbing Claudius thus makes the ensuing impossibility of Hamlet forcing him to drink easier to swallow. Since, as previously argued, stabbing Claudius contradicts the words allegedly embodying such an action; since obvious difficulties exist with figuratively reading "drink" as a stab (why did Hamlet not stab in the first place if he was going to stab in the second ? A whole range of questions with no *textual* answers a la the word-spinning of why Claudius says" I am but hurt" is thus created); and since Shakespeare does not textually support Claudius as physically unable to defend himself - revenge critics will probably hope the question goes away and emphasise a sub-set of the acting question: Hamlet acts imperatively because he speaks imperatively.[34]

I have already indicated that the sentence - "Here . . . drink this" - makes a certain act conditional on Claudius voluntarily performing another act, i.e. "coming here." Let us now return to the imperative. I have till now assumed that we all understand Hamlet's sentence "Drink . . . this potion" as imperative - but this, of course, is incorrect. *I* understand the sentence imperatively, as one "used to issue orders, commands, demands, requests, exhortations, permissions, concessions, warnings and advice"[35]; all critics (except Battenhouse) understand it declaratively. The difference is simple - *I* understand Hamlet speaking *prescriptively*, pointing out to Claudius what *he* should do in the future; *they* understand it as *declarative or descriptive of an act* occurring presently or in the immediate past. Their understanding of "Here . . . drink this" thus requires an actor's *ironic voice and action* to undermine the actual extensional meaning of the imperatives ("Here" and "Drink this") so as to convert them into one of two declaratives: "I am making you drink here" (describes present action) or "I have made you drink here" (describes immediate past action.) It must be undermined thus: revenge critics cannot argue Hamlet acting imperatively because he speaks imperatively because acting imperatively is in fact precisely what Hamlet does - he demands/requests/exhorts/advises the *future* drinking of poison. Since the imperative is prescriptive, it is by definition not declarative of action which has or is occurring.

How can this be argued against ? To establish that the revenge action depends on tone does not prima facie get me very far; tone is essential to meaning. After all, the phrase "Take this" also has an imperative form and yet we know that it *could* be ironic because declarative: thus "Take this' he said as he ran his enemy through." Note that I use "Take this" as an example because Hamlet refers to "*this potion*'"; I assume revenge critics want to understand "Drink . . . this" the same way they understand an ironic "Take this." One problem here is the distinction between "this" and "that." Even with an ironic tone, "this" and "that," like "here" and "there," have a time dimension: "this" has sense of futurity since something close to you - "this" (something - a blow, cup, sword - close to the speaker) - must become "that" (a blow, cup, sword-thrust) close to or inflicted on the other. The connotations surrounding the words explain why it is that when a person gives another a blow they say "Take that" rather than "Take this" or (referring back to Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night*) "There's for you" rather than "Here's for you." As a statement of futurity, first "Take this" has to be said, *then* the action done - which raises the question "why is the other person doing nothing to prevent it? "I would thus argue that another circumstance is inferred from the phrase "Take this" - that "the enemy" in question could do nothing to prevent his "taking this," the future action. This neat argument re-emphasises the crucial importance of Claudius being so weak that he cannot avoid the action, i.e. he has been stabbed. Once again actors must create textually contradictory action to avoid the meaning of subsequent words.

But the main argument goes thus: the phrase "Take this" is understood ironically because we almost immediately know the action. Knowing the context, we understand it ironically - "he ran his enemy through" establishes such a context for "Take this"; it conceptually grounds the irony. What points our understanding of tone is that sub-structure of total meaning, conceptual meaning. Thus *Hamlet* is distinguished: it is precisely because critics either do not wish to respond to or do not know the extensional meaning of "Drink" that they appeal to tone - which rather puts the cart before the horse. The moment we realise that an actor must speak and act ironically so as to undercut the ordinary meaning of "Drink" and "this" (and "Here"), we must ask what requires such an ironic tone. Nothing in the immediate micro-context requires it - in fact the prima facie meaning of the words denies it; so where is it conceptually grounded ? Activating an ironic tone always requires reference to another conceptually derived context explaining why that tone and not another. Now it is surely obvious that actors speak and act ironically because they believe that just such a context exists - not the immediate context (the meaning of "Here", "Drink" or this") but the thematic context (the meaning of the play). Before discussing this further, I will return to the imperative and briefly indicate how it fits what I see as the play's context.

Since almost all imperatives require acts which cannot be physically enforced - we cannot, for example, physically force a waiter to serve us - we rely on explicit or implicit positive inducement ("Do this because it is good for you") or on social sanctions up to and including death to enforce "consent" ("Do this otherwise. . . ."). To simplify discussion, I will consider only the imperative threat. Rommel, for example, was "forced" to drink poison because of threats against his family; the threat to something held valuable enforced a "voluntary" action otherwise physically impossible. So: before subverting the imperative by an impossible act of force, we must first explore the unmentioned sanctions. The threat implicit in Hamlet offering the cup was obvious to an Elizabethan audience: Both Hamlet and Claudius believe they will be judged for their actions on earth in a life after death (they express such beliefs in 3.1 "To be" and 3.3. "O, my offence is rank," respectively). Hamlet imperatively requiring Claudius to drink (after coming "here") therefore contains a sanction readily perceived by that audience: Claudius drinking is an act of self-judgment he must do to avoid God's judgment after death (for which see 1 Cor. 11:31). Taking an offered cup is an action the Elizabethans did every Sunday: the communion. Hamlet's sentence is thus not a descriptive "I have made you do this" but the *usual* prescriptive - "you should do this to avoid damnation" or "you must do this to gain salvation." The question then becomes - why does Hamlet offer the cup ? The answer is the same as why he delays his revenge; conscience-ness [sic] of sinful equality with Claudius (for which see "To be, or not to be" and, in this article, my comments on "thou incestuous, murd'rous damned Dane").

"He is justly served": the word "served" is either (1) a straightforward description of actual action with additional resonances: to wait upon (a person) at table: hence, to set food before, help a person to food" (OED III: 31, connected to sense 1.4, is most apposite). Given six columns in the OED, this meaning is cognate with the passivities of Hamlet's "[1] Here . . . [2] drink [3] of [4] this."

Or, (2) it is *only* a verbal exclamation, both of satisfaction at seeing Claudius "justly" punished, and of irony at him being involuntarily "served" with his own poison. Claudius thus receives his "just deserts," "served" being restricted to verbal substantive 2, the aphetic form of "deserve" - a definition given three lines in the OED.

"Served" can thus be understood in two ways. The first accepts the word's predominant meaning - a meaning supported by *Macbeth* 1.7.9-12: "But in these cases / We still have judgment here; this even-handed justice/ *Commends* th' ingredients of our poisoned chalice / To our own lips." Often cited as a Shakespearean memory of *Hamlet* - thus Sprague brackets it with "the grim detail of Hamlet forcing the poison on the King "[0p cit,p. 183] - it could only be thus cited by paying absolutely no attention to meaning. For "commends" is a very precise word; per the OED it means:

1. To give in trust or charge, deliver to one's care or keeping.
2. To present as worthy of favourable acceptance, regard, attention or notice; to direct attention to; to recommend.
3. (gen) To mention as worthy of acceptance or approval; to express approbation of, praise, extol.
5. To recommend to kindly remembrance; formerly used in conveying greetings.

Macbeth images a judge *prescriptively* recommending the drinking of a poisoned cup to the person who created it; the person implicitly judged can take it or not as they wish. In other words - an imperative act. The questions here are simple: when would a poisoned cup be offered with what in *Hamlet* is an implicit but in *Macbeth* is an explicit recommendation that it be drunk? why is this action perfectly "just" or (to use Marcbeth's words)" even-handed"? why does this "even-handed" judge expect the person judged to reach out and take it, an expectancy implicit in the offering ? Note that all this does not deny the sense of "deserve": it merely raises the question "what does Claudius justly deserve from Hamlet?"

The second way to construe "served" stresses not only that it must be *solely* ironic and aphetic but that Claudius being "justly served" can only mean the retributive justice of an eye for an eye. So, since Hamlet "must" revenge - not only must Hamlet speak ironically, the court speak ironically but Laertes must also speak ironically. Another way merely extends the concept of irony to theme: it seeks an ironic *explanation* for Hamlet serving Claudius a cup. Thus Battenhouse's reading: Hamlet offers the cup in a "Black Mass," an act indicating his own blasphemous damnation; Horatio's "flights of angels" singing Hamlet to his rest is thus unconsciously ironical. But Battenhouse reads the end ironically because he sees the pursuit of revenge as damnable - an unappealing idea to critics who believe Hamlet's revenge is both necessary and good. A recurring argument, it could be summarised thus.

"What we know must be and is." I will consider this argument's methodological problem by first discussing why I have ignored "Is thy union here ?/ Follow my mother." My problem is that these phrases require a knowledge of *Hamlet* outside the issues raised in this paper. It is, for example, crucial to know that the revenge the ghost apparently abjures is conditional on *Hamlet* not contriving against his mother; this person is to be left to her conscience (1.5.85-7). Although critics naturally identify "mother" with Gertrude, linguistically "mother" can be used quite otherwise. Thus Christ uses it: "Who is my mother; and who is my brother ? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren" (*Mark* 3: 33-4 & other Gospels). Like "brother," "mother" can be used as a metaphor for closeness, kinship, emotional ties of the first order, rather than as a naturalistic denotation of actual blood relation. So - when Hamlet calls Claudius "dear mother" (per 4.3.49), we understand that Claudius is a person against whom Hamlet cannot revengefully contrive (per the ghost's condition on revenge). In other words, even though Claudius is Hamlet's greatest enemy he is nonetheless a person just like Hamlet, as close to him as his mother, brother or neighbour. Shakespeare emphasises the relation between Claudius's life and Hamlet's mother when Claudius recognises (albeit, as he thinks, rhetorically)that "the Queen his mother" is "conjunctive to my life and soul" (4.7.11-13). In the context of the ghost's command and Hamlet's own recognition, this is true; as long as Gertrude lives Claudius lives. This formulation allows us to recognise two formal balances: (1) Claudius' responsibility for Gertrude's death prefigures his responsibility for his own death; and (2), that as Gertrude dies - by willingly drinking (with "I pray you pardon me") - so does Claudius, willingly drinking from a cup in a symbolic prayer for pardon. By inviting Claudius to follow the actions of his mother, allowing him to judge himself and therefore avoid damnation in the life to come, Hamlet deliberately eschews revenge. And why? because if Hamlet revenges, if he judges Claudius - he judges himself. In other words, the thematic predecessor of *Measure for Measure* is *Hamlet.*

This inadequate discussion emphasises my difficulty with some of the words at the end of the play when there is no agreement about *Hamlet's* plot. Thus a more limited objective: to demonstrate that Hamlet does not kill Claudius should raise exactly the question not dealt with here - what is this action a probable or necessary thematic consequence of ? But not only is this not explored - it is not even granted as a possibility to be explored ! Hamlet must revenge - therefore he must stab and must attack with the cup: to critics who argue thus, any textual argument is irrelevant; indeed, as we will see, they finally assert the right to critically believe Hamlet kills Claudius even though they will not or cannot argue for it. So - to consider how Hamlet intends to use the sword, the improbability of the court not defending the King given their words, the absurd preference for "off" when some liquor remains; to question Hamlet insulting Claudius when the words allegedly insulting also apply to Hamlet; to discuss what "Here . . . do this" means; to explicate revenge critics' peculiar definition of "drink," their curious understanding of the imperative, and their non-textual assumption of a Claudius so weak he cannot avoid Hamlet "attacking" with a cup; to ask what textual authority critics have for restricting "served" (and for re-defining "commends" in a novel way) - all such analysis is irrelevant. And to conclude that Hamlet killing Claudius crucially requires an actor's ironic voice and ironic dramatic action to contradict the words is absurd. The most famous example of a theory assuming an existence independent of what it was supposed to explain, is Ptolemy's theory of planetary motion. Once treated as "the truth," a curious thing occurred; in succeeding centuries, discrepant observations of reality were explained by postulating an increasingly confused set of epicycles *in an effort to maintain the theory*. The analogy with the revenge theory's literary epicycles is exact: when a word's denotation threatens the revenge reading, why, it can be ignored (as with "yet" or "Here"), or contradicted ("off"), or dramatically metaphorised ("Drink"), or construed ironically ("Treason, treason" and "served"), or - if worst comes to worst - changed ("Stabs" for "Hurts"). Since the revenge theory governs the reading of any instance, it can never by *definition* be falsified. This is unacceptable.

As we have seen, the revenge action can only be read out of the actual text by proposing that "it is because it must be so": Hamlet forces the cup on Claudius because Hamlet must revenge - "the natural impression which we all receive on reading the play" (per A.C. Bradley). But impressions can be tested and this impression, based on the self-evidence of asserted belief, is as easily undermined as the end it demands. The place to start is the "cellarage" (1.5.142ff): why does that "worthy pioner" the ghost, acting as a devil from the hell beneath the stage, prompt the use of the sword of justice and revenge? why does Hamlet see himself at 2.2.596 as "Prompted to my revenge by heaven and *hell*"? why does the ghost acting as the devil prompt absolute justice and thus undermine the revenge it so apparently abjures ? Portia answered thus:

> And earthly power doth then show likest God's
> When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
> Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
> That in the course of justice none of us
> Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,
> And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
> The deeds of mercy.
>
> *Merchant*, 4.1.198-202

In a world ruled only by justice, all are damned. Hamlet's own formulation at 2.2.541 is succinct: "Use every man after his desert and who shall scape whipping?" Thus the devil's interest in absolute justice - and thus the reason why, when Hamlet implicitly accepts the ghost-as-a-devil, the concepts of love, friendship, grace, help and mercy(all members of the same family - but why is "help" a member of the same family as "love"? why mention "help" at all?) invade his speech as he searches for an oath he is willing to have his friends swear (i.e.1.5.169-80). As the play's pre-occupation with "love," a word that occurs 67 times, and neglect of "revenge" - 15 times - demonstrates, the law / justice / revenge is not the prime human value. And so, in the shadow of imminent death, Hamlet cannot judge Claudius as a murderer worthy of death - because, as a murderer deserving the same judgment, he would thus deny himself God's mercy; - and Claudius must judge himself - or God will. Thus, struck by the conscience that delayed his revenge in "To be" - Hamlet offers the cup: and, struck by the conscience he exhibited in 3.3. - Claudius takes it. What Hamlet swears to do - "Adieu, adieu, remember me" (1.5.111-12) - thus finds, in offering a union in a chalice, an action appropiate to a major reference: I.Cor.11:25 - "this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." The command to revenge and the command to "remember me" are thus *not* the same even if Hamlet himself initially thought so (cf. the usual reductive reading in Jenkins, op cit, p. 154 footnote). For the play *expands* the meaning of "Remember me" - from remembering his father's death and the revenge he "must" do, to remembering the ghost's ambivalence in the "cellarage," to remembering death and the judgment that is to come in "To be," to remembering Christ and hoping for God's mercy at play's end. For just as *Hamlet* begins at night and ends in day, so Hamlet passes through the night of justice and revenge to the day of love and mercy. In a classic Aristotleian perepity, the values of the play's end reverses its beginning.

NOTES

1. Harley Granville Barker *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (London 1935), p. 183.

2. *Shakespearian Tragedy* (rpt. Bloomington: Indiana U.P. 1969), pp.250/256.

3. The Arden *Hamlet* ed. H. Jenkins (London Methuen 1982) note to 1.333,p.414. Jenkins neither mentions who objects nor gives their reasons. Despite a search for other critics arguing Hamlet's offer of the cup, I am only aware of Battenhouse. It has likewise been difficult to find *any* analysis of the end: for example, neither B.L. Reid's "The Last Act and The Action of *Hamlet*," *Yale Review*,54,1964,pp.137-50, nor Richard Fly's "Accommodating Death: The Ending of *Hamlet*," (*Stud. in Eng. Lit. Vol.24* Spring 1984, pp. 257-75), nor J. Anthony Burton's "Hamlet, Osric, and the Duel," (*Shakespeare Bulletin:* formerly *Bulletin of the N.Y. Shakespeare Society*,2,X July-August 1984 5-7,22-25) actually analyse the text at all ! Perhaps Michael C. Andrews' "The Double-Death of Claudius in *Hamlet*," *Renaissance Papers*, ed. Dennis Donovan 1970) does - but I have been unable to find it. If the title indicates the line, Jenkins' quote exemplifies it.

4. All *Hamlet* quotes are from the Signet, ed. Edward Hubler (N.Y.NEL 1963).

5. L.C. Knights, *An Approach to Hamlet* (Stanford: Stanford U.P. 1961) passim.

6. Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford: Stanford U.P. 1967) p. 235.

7. Sentences in quotation marks, usually prefaced by phrases like "some critics" or "another objection," are from various letters. In deference to editorial wish, specific identification has been deleted. Such letters have put arguments I would otherwise never have thought necessary to consider or have alerted me to the need to repeat, clarify and emphasise. This article thus contains some possibly tedious redundancy.

8. For example and recognising stage tradition, Dover Wilson's 1934 The New Shakespeare *Hamlet*, collected in *The Works of William Shakespeare* (N.Y. Octopus Books 1980). Quotations from Shakespeare's other plays are from this collection.

9. To object that I did not discuss "the *editorial* history of changing 'hurts' to 'stabs'" is irrelevant if the reasoning supporting that history is defective. And to object that I have not surveyed Shakespeare's usage of "hurts" is also irrelevant.

10. per Roger Manvell, *Shakespeare and Film* (London 1971) p. 43

11. New Penguin *Hamlet*, ed.T.J.B. Spencer (Harmondsworth Penguin 1980) p. 356

12. Victorian Assoc. for the Teaching of English pamphlet, n.d. approx. 1975 p.10

13. Q1 has a "?" while both Q2 and Folio have a comma. Elizabethan compositors used the comma and question mark for various tones and pauses which now have specialised marks. As Eric Partridge noted about the "!" and the "?" (In *You Have A Point There* London Routledge 1953 rep. 1983): "strictly they are rhetorial or elocutionary rather than punctuational." The question is therefore: what tone is more probable ? Laertes' failure to respond makes a "?" less textually probable than a "!". Most of my *Hamlet* editions favor the '!": Edwards' New Cambridge (C.U.P.) 1984P, Jenkins' Arden, The Riverside Shakespeare ed. G.Blakesmore Evans et al (Boston 1974), The New Swan ed. Bernard Lott (London 1968), Dover Wilson's New Shakespeare and W.J. Craig's 1904 Oxford; - the "?" is used by the Folger *Hamlet* ed. L.B. Wright and V. Lamar (N.Y. 1957), Hubler's Signet, Spencer's New Penguin and Wilkes' Challis; - G.B. Harrison's 1937 Penguin uses Q2/Folio's comma. None of these tones affect the meaning; Hamlet's attention is on the poisoned sword-*point*.

14. After noting "the extraordinary behaviour of the courtiers who cry "Treason ! Treason !" when Hamlet stabs the King but do nothing therafter to prevent him from forcing Claudius to drink the poison" (in "The Politics of *Hamlet*" (*Stratford upon Avon Studies* #5 ed.J. Brown et al London 1965 pp. 129-47, p. 144), E.A.J. Honiggman refers their failure to indecision as to who is actually King, Hamlet or Claudius. He assumes two things here: (1) that the court believes Laertes' accusation that the King's to blame; and (2) that they believe Claudius murdered King Hamlet and thus that Hamlet is the rightful King. Since both Honiggman and the majority rely on a common premiss - that the court believe Laertes - I will only consider that argument. Note, however, that Honiggman's second premise involves the court having knowledge they do not have.

15. A.C. Sprague, *Shakespeare and the Actors* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard U.P. 1948) p. 183.

16. A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearian Tragedy* (Lon. 1904/ 1983 Macmillan Papermac) p.80

17. B. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror* (Harmondsworth Penguin 1979) p. 542.

18. Sir A.C. Doyle *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* "Silver Blaze" (London 1904)

19. To briefly point the poison-cure/ marriage/ soul/ Christ references implicit in the union:

(a) Some critics have recognised the union's pun on "marriage" (I think the first was Peter Alexander in the 1950's but am not sure). Why Claudius' marriage is important will be alluded to at the end.

(b) More recently the medical symbolism of drinking a pearl as a cure has been recognised with all that this implies as a culmination of the play's sickness imagery (see Anna K. Nardo's " 'Here' s to thy Health': The Pearl in Hamlet's Wine" in *English Language Notes* XXIII Dec. 1985, pp. 36-42). But the union is a cure not only for Denmark (the traditional reading - see Nardo amongst others) but for Claudius's own sins (the *traditional* imagery of sin as sickness is alluded to by Gertrude "to my sick soul, as sin's true nature is" 4.4.17); this is reinforced by the pearl's other references.

(c) For it is, as the play insists, not only a pearl but one "richer than that which four successive Kings/ In Denmark's crown have worn" i.e. a union - a pearl of great price. Thus the Biblical allusion to the kingdom of heaven as a pearl of great price which a merchant sells all that he has to possess; from a theological point of view to enter the kingdom of heaven is to give up all one thinks one possesses to possess one's soul by grace of God. This is Claudius' problem: how can he be forgiven when he is "still possess'd/ Of those things for which [he] did the murder - My crown, mine own ambition and my queen"? Thus the point of Hamlet pricking Claudius; it strips him of all remaining possession and forces him to contemplate the judgmental consequences of his imminent death for his own soul. The dramatic tension of the pause (see note 29) as Claudius contemplates the offered cup is thus evident: will he recognise that, dying, he actually possessess nothing, or will old habits assert themselves ?

(d) Likewise Christ. There are two lines of thought to pursue: either there is a line of development reaching back to the early patristic writings which referred to Christ as the "Great" or "Mysterious union," or the identification of Christ with a pearl derives from aspects of the communion: either (a) the medieval holding up of the cup for the adoration of the congregation, or (b) since the word "union" became (at some point; when?) a technical church term referring to the wafer/ Christ's body in the communion, a metaphorical process occurred - the round white wafer looks like a pearl/ a pearl is pure (because white), spotless, unstained/ a pearl is of great value. Hamlet holding out the cup and asking Claudius to voluntarily drink - the action of the communion - is thus symbolically reinforced by the union in the chalice. That unions/ pearls of great price are identified with Christ is, incidentally, to resolve the "Indian/ Judean" crux in *Othello* in favor of "Judean"- but I'll leave this for another day.

It may be worth pointing out that drinking as an emblem of Claudius' sinfulness (drunkenness is of course sin's traditional emblem; e.g. Barnardo in *Measure*) is converted too by Claudius voluntarily drinking from the cup (with all its attendant symbolisms) into a sign of grace - but, as this note's length indicates, all this requires much analysis. This is especially so given the opposition such observations will arouse; scholars who are evangelistically secular in their construction of Shakespeare are loath to recognise the play's Biblical dimension (thus, for example, Jenkins' 159 page introduction to the Arden fails to mention the Bible at all, not even in the 40 pages [pp. 82-122] he devotes to discussing sources for the play down to the line level). This is, of course, bad scholarship and makes for worse criticism, a point I will take up elsewhere.

20. *Hamlet* directed by George Rylands: issued by Argo Record Co. 1961

21. This must now be qualified by, of all things, an Australian edition - the Challis Shakespeare *Hamlet* ed.G.A.Wilkes (Sydney, University of Sydney Press 1984). Since the editor took "Q2 as copy-text and records all departures from it" (p. 16), "of" was probably chosen *only* because it was in Q2. In a substantive collateral text situation, a grapheme's existence in a copy text is editorially convenient in certain *critical* situation; it is not a critical reason for acceptance - as Greg well understood (see "The Rationale of the Copy Text" *Stud. in Bibliography*. III 1950 pp. 19-36, esp.pp.29 and 31). This explains why I did not cite "Q2"s authority" as a *critical* argument for accepting "of".

22. "The Interpretation of Poetry" in *Aesthetic Inquiry* ed. M.C.Beardsley (Belmonth Calif. 1967) p.120-21

23. *Hamlet: A study in Critical Method* (Cambridge C.U.P. 1931) p.23

24. *Hamlet* ed.T.M.Parrott and H.Craig (N.Y. 1938 rep. 1976 AMS) p.244. This is the only "reason" advanced for "off" I can find in the literature.

25. S.S.Hussey *The Literary Language of Shakespeare* (N.Y. Longman 1982) p.120. My discussion of "thou" is oversimple; see Randolph Quirk's "Shakespeare and the English Language" pp.70-73, in *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies* ed.K.Muir and S.Schoenbaum (C.U.P. 1971): space forbids anything more subtle.

26. It should be clear by now that I disagree with many "mainstream" interpretations of other parts of *Hamlet*: for example it is almost useless for me to refer to "To be, or not to be" as indicating why Hamlet delays (I say this despite having done so) when critics believe that it is about suicide. "To be" is an example of very clear-cut disagreement which may occur in other areas of the play. Thus my hesitancy in discussing how "incestuous" relates to Hamlet. "Incest," of course, is the archetypal symbol of how lust/passion/desire/ will break even the most socially prohibited of relations. But since my awareness that Hamlet views himself as lustful (which is naturalistically why Hamlet must leave Ophelia or force her to leave him in the "nunnery") may not be shared, and since it requires massive background discussion, I can only sketch the argument.

27. Compare Sermon #18 (from *The Sermons of John Donne* ed. George Potter et al (Berkley Uni. Calif. Press, Vol.III 1957): talking of "theeves and murderers," Donne abjures, "love them as they are creatures, hate them as they are Traytors" and later notes "that one can love the man and hate the things he does" (pp.380/ 382-3).

28. R.Sterne, *John Gielgud Directs Richard Burton in Hamlet* (London 1968) p.118. One rather baffling objection here, given that Gielgud directed Burton to speak thus, was - "Did (I) think of checking Gielgud's recordings?" To repeat - Gielgud's quote is only an *example* of how performance avoids the conceptual meaning of "Here . . . drink this." Other ways avoid meaning by speaking the line incoherently, or just not responding to the meaning of "Here" at all. So, in his 1957 recording, Gielgud "plays dead" on the meaning of "Here" by speaking it with the same tone as the succeeding words. "Here" is not stressed because the action expressing its meaning is not performed.

29. Incidentally, Hamlet repeating "here" in "Is thy union here?" implies Claudius understandably hesitating: since the union is still "here" with Hamlet, Claudius has not yet taken it. Hamlet's "Follow my mother" thus metaphorically repeats his previous demand that Claudius drink: it has the sense of "Follow the example of my mother and drink." As I later indicate, the meaning "mother" assumes in *Hamlet* requires a more complete discussion.

30. per Stanley Wells' report of Peter Hall's 1965 production in *Royal Shakespeare: Four Major*

Productions at Stratford upon Avon Manchester . U.P. 1977p.35.

31. "De Poetica" in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* ed.R.McKeon (N.Y. Random 1941) ch.25 pt.1461-9-12. All references are to this work.

32 Productions where Hamlet offered the cup have occurred only recently: Trevor Nunn's 1970 (reported by Peter Thompson *Sh. Survey* Vol.24 1974 p.122) and Jonathan Miller's 1982 productions (reported by Roger Warren *Sh. Quarterly* Vol.34/1 LSpring 1983 p,87). Presumably they motivated Claudius taking the cup by referring to romantic rhetoric - "I cannot live without Gertrude" - with overtones of Claudius nullifying Hamlet's revenge. But Jonathan Miller understood that on "the command to 'Drink . . . [&c]', far from having to be forced to drink the poison, [Claudius] accepted the cup as if it were a welcome chalice. He had finally been released from the tyranny of possession. No longer holding any of the prizes for which he had committed the original crime, Hamlet is denied his revenge" (*Subsequent Performances* London, Faber & Faber 1986, p.115). Warren however understood the King to take "the poisoned cup *offered* by Hamlet"; Miller thus failed to dramatically communicate that Hamlet was (apparently) not intended to be seen as deliberately offering the cup at all. But the common problem with these productions is not Claudius' motivation for drinking but Hamlet's for offereing: why offer if it is (quite rightly) seen not to be the act of revenge? and if Hamlet is not offering the cup why does he allow Claudius to simply take it? It just does not make sense - or rather it has the arbitary and therefore unsatisfactory sense of a mere coup de theatre which does not address all the problems (vis Thompson's opinion of the Nunn production).

33. Martin Huntley "The Semantics of English Imperatives" *Linguistics and Philosophy* Vol.7/ 1984 pp.103-34, p.103

34. To discuss acting raises the question ot theatrical (and implicitly critical) tradition. What created that tradition? - which involves asking: how old is it? The modern acting tradition of *Hamlet* is only as old as the 1661 restoration of the theatres. The break-up of the King's Men on the banning of the theatres in 1642 destroyed any viva voce tradition for acting the last scene. With no guide for interpreting the play (no director and no critical tradition); probably using Q5 (per Edwards, op cit, p.61), a 1637 quarto whose compositorial misreadings may have changed Q2's *of* to *off*; and stressed by the period's short rehearsal time (a consequence of short production runs, in turn a consequence of a small theatre going public constantly demanding novelty: as the third play performed, *Hamlet* was thus in rehearsal simultaneously with other productions, a situation making for simplicity of response i.e. melodrama) - given all this, the 1661 actors probably botched a revenge interpretation congruent with other revenge plays they knew. *Hamlet's* revenge tradition, a tradition where theatre and later literary critics *always* saw Hamlet kill Claudius, is thus the final legacy of the English Civil War. The play's critical history is predicated on an interiorised perception of theatrical action rather than textual analysis - as the absence of such analysis negatively indicates (see note 3). The historical conditions underlying the present acting tradition invalidates statements such as in the Argo flyer (note 22: and, I notice, in the Folger *Hamlet*) based on Downes' 1708 comments 47 years after the event:

> Thomas Betterton played Hamlet in 1709 when he was nearly 75 years of age. Sir William D'Avenant taught Betterton every word when the play was revived with the re-opening of the theatres in 1661, and D'Avenant had seen Joseph Taylor in the part, whose name appears in the list of Players in the First Folio. He succeeded Richard Burbage. Thus the acting tradition is continuous and strong.

The modern tradition may be strong - but what does it contain? Appeals to a theatrical tradition are as false as appeals to a unanimous critical tradition (for example, Jenkins, op cit, p. 154): any tradition is only as good as the analysis backing it.

Why Hamlet Dies

JOSEPH J. ROMM

In the first act of the play, the Ghost of Hamlet's father asks his son to avenge his murder by killing Claudius. The results of the Ghost's desire for revenge are that his son and wife are dead at the play's end, his conquests have been lost, and the son of his former enemy Fortinbras is going to inherit his entire kingdom.[1] Is it not clear that Hamlet's revenge is essentially a failure? It is often argued that the reason Hamlet fails is because he delays several weeks achieving his revenge, during which time he kills several people.[2] But if delay were Hamlet's failure, why does Laertes, who does not delay, have no more successful a revenge than Hamlet ?

Laertes, like Hamlet, has suffered the murder of his father and knows who the murderer is. Shakespeare directly acknowledges the parallel between the two sons when he has Hamlet say of Laertes, "by the image of my cause I see/ The portraiture of his" (5.2.77-78).[3] Yet, upon learning of his father's murder, Laertes comes with "impetuous haste" and "in a riotous head." Hamlet would not kill Claudius while Claudius was praying, but Laertes would like to cut Hamlet's throat in the church" (4.7. 125). Laertes does not hesitate - he fights with Hamlet in their first encounter, and kills Hamlet in their second encounter. Yet the swiftly vengeful Laertes has the same horrible fate as the delaying Hamlet: Laertes dies, and his family line presumably dies with him.

Shakespeare seems to have put Laertes in the play specifically to negate the idea that Hamlet dies because he delays. Perhaps Shakespeare's point was that it was not delay that killed Hamlet, but it was the desire for revenge. Laertes says as he swears to be "revenged/Most throughly for my father,"

> To hell, allegiance ! Vows to the blackest devil !
> Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit !
> I dare damnation.
>
> (4.5. 131-133)

So he realizes that killing for revenge may be damnable murder. Hamlet, after hearing the Ghost's story, also seems to see that possibility, for he says, "And shall I couple hell ?" (1.5. 93)

If revenge killing is damnable, then the Ghost is an evil spirit from hell. While this is not the orthodox view, many critics have cited clues that indicate the Ghost is an evil spirit: He comes fully armored, he fears to scent the morning air, trembles at the cock crow, and, most important, he urges Hamlet to kill Claudius for revenge - a violation of the teachings of the Church.[4] But there is even firmer evidence, which is rarely cited. In the previous scene, we have heard Hamlet compare his father - "so excellent a king" - to Claudius as "Hyperion to a satyr." Hamlet sees his uncle as half-man, half-beast, and he sees his father as the Sun God. In the Chamber scene, Hamlet will again compare his father to the Sun God.[5] But the Ghost we have seen is afraid of sunlight ! Hamlet's view, before speaking to the Ghost, is that it is either a "spirit of health" bringing "airs from heaven" with "charitable" intents or a "goblin damned" bringing "blasts from hell" with "wicked" intents. Shakespeare's view should be clear to us at this point.

After speaking to the Ghost, Hamlet still worries it may be a "damned Ghost," and he says he must test the Ghost's words in the Mousetrap because the Ghost "May be a devil" assuming a "pleasing shape" trying to "damn" Hamlet. After the Mousetrap, Hamlet says he no longer doubts the Ghost (although he still does not act). But we know from *Macbeth* that "often times to win us to our harm/The instruments of Darkness tell us truths. (1.3. 123-124).[6]

Yet, arguments external to the play are not needed. Consider Hamlet's first soliloquy after he confirms the Ghost's story:

> 'Tis now the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on.
>
> (3.2. 379-383)

If the Mousetrap confirmed the Ghost was not the devil, as so many critics maintain, then we would expect Hamlet to align himself with heaven at this point. Instead, as Prosser writes, we have an "explicit association with Hell, the demonic practices of witchcraft, and the blasts of contagion."[7]

Immediately after this speech is the brief prayer scene, in which Hamlet delays killing Claudius because he wants to be sure of sending his soul to hell. Many have called this excuse hellish.[8] In the very next scene, Hamlet commits his first evil act - he kills Polonius - and then the Ghost appears. Hamlet has told us this is the "very witching time of night, when churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out /Contagion to this world," and the Ghost appears. Hamlet's speech is followed by the Ghost's appearance within several minutes stage time, and, it seems, real time. Certainly it is still the same "time of night." This, I believe, is no small point. The Churchyard has indeed "yawned" and so Shakespeare is labelling the Ghost as Hell's contagion !

We can see another of Shakespeare's techniques for indicating that the Ghost is an evil and corrupting influence, by tracing his use of the word "foul." The first occurrence of the word is just after Horatio tells Hamlet of the Ghost. Hamlet says he suspects "some foul play," and he finishes by saying, "Foul deeds will rise, though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes"(1.2.257-258). Next, the Ghost tells Hamlet he is being tormented "Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature/Are burnt and purg'd away"(1.5. 12-13). "Foul deeds" are rising. Then, the Ghost tells Hamlet to

> Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. . . .
> Murder most foul, as in the best it is
> But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.
> (1.5. 27-28).

Next, Hamlet tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that the world "appearth nothing to me but a *foul* and pestilent congregation of vapors" (2.2.302-303). We knew from his first soliloquy, before he met the Ghost, that Hamlet was world weary, but it is only after he has met the Ghost that the world appears "foul" to him. Next, Hamlet says to Horatio that if the Mousetrap does not show Claudius's occulted guilt," then "my imaginations are as *foul/* As Vulcan's stithy" (3.2.83-84). Here too we see evidence of Hamlet's growing corruption.

Next, Claudius, in the prayer scene, calls his fratricide a "foul murder," echoing the Ghost's words. Then, after Hamlet kills Polonius, Claudius regrets not having kept Hamlet "restrained" saying;

> But so much was our love
> We would not understand what was most fit,
> But, like the owner of a foul disease,
> To keep it from divulging, let it feed
> Even on the pith of life.
> (4.1.19-23)

Since Hamlet has just murdered Polonius, and the Ghost has said that murder is "most foul, as in the best it is," these lines are very apt. Both Hamlet and Claudius are now murderers; both are owners of a foul disease. Hamlet will soon commit two more foul murders when he writes the execution order dooming his old friends.[9]

Finally, Laertes, after getting his revenge (and getting mortally wounded in the process), says of his treacherous action: "The foul practice hath turned itself on me" (5.2.323-324). This is the clincher. Laertes is calling his revenge a "foul practice," and at this point we are certainly not inclined to disagree

In the entire play, these are the only lines in which Shakespeare labels something "foul." They show the spread of a "foul disease" through the state of Denmark, which echoes throughout the play in images of poison, disease, and decay. Has not the Ghost infected Hamlet with Hell's contagion[10]- his all-consuming desire for revenge, which leads Hamlet to commit foul murders? And if revenge is a "foul practice," and the ghost is being tormented for 'foul crimes," then is he not urging Hamlet to do the same thing he himself is being punished for ? Thus Shakespeare links what Hamlet's father *was* to what Hamlet will *become*.

That this is Shakespeare's point is clear from the soldier imagery he uses throughout the play. Shakespeare depicts Hamlet's father as a soldier at the play's beginning.[11] He enters "with that fair and warlike form" of Hamlet's father. The Ghost enters with " martial stalk," carrying a truncheon, the baton of a military commander. He inspires Horatio to say,

> Such was the very armour he had on
> When he th' ambitious Norway combated
> So frown'd he once, when in any angry parle,
> He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.
> (1.1.63-66)

Horatio explains how old King Hamlet was "esteemed" throughout "this side of our known world" as "valiant" and how he slew old King Fortinbras in a one to one combat, thereby capturing much of his land.

Hamlet's father was a violent and successful warrior. The image of the Ghost as a complete soldier is reinforced by the dialogue

> *Hor.* . . . a figure like your father,
> Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe. . . .
> *Ham.* Arm'd, say you ?
> *All.* Arm'd, my lord.
> *Ham.* From top to toe ?
> *All.* My lord, from head to foot.
> (1.2.199-200, 226-227)

What of the final scene ? Hamlet has a rapier and dagger fight with Horatio and turns Elsinore into a sight that "becomes the field [battlefield]." We then hear the "warlike noise" of the "warlike volley" of Fortinbras's army. Fortinbras then orders that Hamlet be carried away "like a soldier" by four army captains and that Hamlet's death receive "the soldiers' music and the rites of war."[12] Shakespeare has explicitly shown that Hamlet becomes like his father by the end of the play - a fighter, a soldier, and a killer of men (and, as we have seen, a committer of foul crimes).

The key thematic point is that Hamlet is not a soldier at the play's beginning. Ophelia's lament is perhaps the best description of Hamlet:

> O, What a noble mind is here o'erthrown !
> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
> Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> Th' observed of all observers, quite, quite down !
> (3.1.152-156)

This is the first time in the play we have seen the word "soldier" applied to Hamlet, and even so, it is clear that in this speech the "soldier" is only one part of Hamlet's great character. The soldier imagery is the key to the entire structure of the play, for it may be said that the progression of the tragedy in the play is Hamlet becoming his father's son. For instance, when the players come, the "passionate speech" Hamlet begins to recite allows him to act the role of a great warrior, Aeneas, describing the "murder" of his father, Priam, another great warrior, at the hands of the Greek Pyrrhus, near the end of the fabled Trojan War. Pyrrhus, too, is avenging the death of his father, Achilles.[13] In the next scene, Hamlet again applies images of war to himself, when he begins the most famous speech of the play:

> To be, or not to be - that is the question:
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
> And by opposing end them.
> (3.1.56-60)

Nigel Alexander writes of these lines:

> The militaristic imagery in which the choice of existence is expressed gives an immediate impression of how violent, and how desperate, is the struggle within Hamlet's own mind. The lines present a military situation in which final defeat is inevitable.[14]

Hamlet will eventually take up arms to end his troubles, but at this point he is still fighting the part of himself that is like his soldier-father, the part Ophelia refers to later in the scene.

Hamlet loses this fight. He becomes more and more like his father as he slowly and reluctantly yields to his father's order to kill Claudius. Hamlet's slow transformation is best demonstrated in the queen's chamber scene, after Hamlet kills Polonius and the Ghost appears. Dover Wilson[15] notes the similarity between the Ghost's "piteous" visit to Hamlet in his mother's chamber and Hamlet's "piteous" visit to Ophelia's chamber. As Ophelia tells Polonius in act two, scene one, Hamlet appeared to her with a "piteous" look, as if he had been "loosed out of hell to speak of horrors." Shakespeare at once compares Hamlet to the Ghost of his father, who a few scenes earlier also appeared as if he had been loosed out of hell to speak of horrors. Whereas in the earlier scene, Ophelia was unable to understand Hamlet - to see or hear him, figuratively - in the later scene, Gertrude was literally unable to see or hear the Ghost of her late husband. After Hamlet implores his mother in vain to see his father, he entreats the Ghost, "Do not look upon me, / Lest with this *piteous* action you convert my stern effects" (3.4.128. Emphasis added). As Wilson says, "The Ghost's farewell to Gertrude is a repetition of Hamlet's farewell to Ophelia at the beginning of Act Two. Shakespeare does not do these things by accident."

Significantly, just prior to Hamlet's speech to the Ghost, Gertrude says to her son:

> Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep,
> And, as the *sleeping soldiers* in th' alarm,
> Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
> Start up and stand an end.
> (3.4.119-122. Emphasis added)

This is the clincher. Shakespeare is indicating here that Hamlet has the potential within him to become like his soldier-father, and that the Ghost awakens this "sleeping soldier" in Hamlet with his "call to arms."[16] In this scene, then, after dispatching his first victim, Hamlet is related to the earlier descriptions of his father through the soldier imagery, and his father is related to the earlier description of his son through the Ghost's "piteous action."

Yet in the progression towards Hamlet's complete capitulation to his soldier-father's will, it seems appropriate that the next thing to incite Hamlet to revenge is Fortinbras' army. Hamlet, inspired by "the imminent death of twenty thousand" soldiers, vows, "O, from this time forth, / My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth" (4.4.65-66). Nevertheless, he gets on the boat to England.

What turns Hamlet around, literally and figuratively, is a "sea-fight" with "a pirate of very warlike appointment." Hamlet's explanation of what happened on the ship is revealing:

Ham. You do remember all the circumstance ?
Hor. Remember it, my lord !
Ham. Sir, *in my heart* there was a kind of *fighting*
That would not let me sleep.
(5.2. 2-5. Emphasis added)

By recasting in act five the Remember me / Remember thee ? exchange from act one, Shakespeare immediately conjures up an image of Hamlet becoming like the Ghost. Then Hamlet admits to Horatio that the urge to fight was in his heart; it came from within. The sleeping soldier could sleep no more ! A few lines later, Hamlet explains to Horatio how he was able to seal the dispatch that sent Guildensetrn and Rosencrantz to their deaths:

Why, even in that was heaven ordiant,
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal. . . .

Although Hamlet finds divine origin in his actions, Hamlet's father and his father's ring made these pointless and willful murders possible. In this foul double murder, the consequence of execution orders signed by Hamlet as surrogate of his father, Hamlet is assuming his father's former role of signer of "a seal'd compact/ Well ratified . . ." (1.1.89-90).

Shortly after this scene, Hamlet kills Claudius, but not before he himself is fatally wounded. Ironically both Hamlet and his father die by poison administered treacherously. The cycle is complete: Hamlet is briefly King of Denmark, and he will be treated "like a soldier" after he dies. The son has yielded to the father's wishes and become like the father. In this view of the play, the Ghost of Hamlet's father not only corrupts Hamlet, but he actually represents the part of Hamlet that is corrupt - the part that kills, and commits foul crimes, and "could drink hot blood." In this sense, the Ghost is Hamlet's evil spirit. Support for this view comes from an unlikely source.

Sprinkled throughout *Hamlet* is an encapsulation of the plot of *Julius Caesar*. At the beginning of *Hamlet*, Horatio compares the atmosphere in Denmark to the atmosphere in Rome "A little ere the mightiest Julius fell" (1.1.117). In act three, Polonius refers to Caesar's death in response to a question by Hamlet: "I did enact Julius Caesar. I was kill'd i' th' Capitol; Brutus kill'd me (3.2.102-103). Since Hamlet kills Polonius two scenes later, Shakespeare seems to be likening Hamlet to Brutus. Later still, Hamlet refers to "Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay" (5.1.206). Finally, at the end of *Hamlet*, as Horatio briefly contemplates suicide - "I am more an antique Roman than a Dane, / Here's yet some liquor left" (5.2.346-347) - he recalls the mood present when Cassius and Brutus commit suicide at the end of *Julius*

Caesar.

Shakespeare closely parallels Brutus's story with Hamlet's to highlight the similarity between the Ghosts - the evil spirits - in the two plays. Brutus's argument for killing Caesar is,

> . . . in the spirit of men there is no blood;
> O that we then could come by Caesar's spirit. . . .
> Caesar must bleed for it !
> (2.1.168-69,171)[17]

What Brutus opposes is the spirit of Caesar - the spirit of tyranny that threatens Rome. Moreover, according to Brutus, Caesar's *spirit* cannot be killed.[18] Yet, Brutus' mistaken reasoning leads him to decide that he must kill Caesar. Brutus's words are then proved true as the murder of Caesar throws Rome into civil strife and unleashes the Ghost of Caesar, who tells Brutus that he is Brutus's "evil spirit." Shakespeare demonstrates that Caesar's Ghost is Brutus's evil spirit by having Brutus become like Caesar after the murder.

Matthew Proser notes that in act four, scene three, Shakespeare gives several speeches to Brutus that parallel speeches Caesar had made earlier.[19] For example, much as Caesar said in act two, scene two, that in spite of bad omens, he was not afraid to go to the Senate because he was "more terrible" than "danger" itself, Brutus responds to Cassius's threat with a similar egotistical air.

> There is not terror, Cassius, in your threats;
> For I am arm'd so strong in honesty
> That they pass by me as the idle wind,
> Which I respect not.
> (4.3.66-69)

There are two more significant instances of Brutus becoming like Caesar. First, in act three scene one, looking at the body of Caesar, Antony says, "Thou art the ruins of the noblest man / That ever lived in the tide of times" (3.1.256-257). At the play's end, looking at the body of Brutus, Antony says, "this was the noblest Roman of them all" (5.5.68). First Caesar is the "noblest" and then Brutus is.

Second, Caesar was a great military leader, a great soldier. At the play's start, Brutus, like Hamlet, is not described in soldier-like terms. Yet, by the play's end, Brutus is forced to take up arms and fight in a battle, and in the final speech of the play, the warrior Octavius says of the dead Brutus,

> According to his virtue let us use him,

> With all respect and *rites* of burial.
> Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie,
> Most *like a soldier*, ordered honorably
> (5.5.76-79. Emphasis added)

The similarity to the end of *Hamlet* is too striking to be coincidental, especially since Shakespeare is thought to have written the plays at about the same time.[20] By the end of *Hamlet*, Hamlet engages in a "sea-fight" and then a duel, and, in the play's final speech, the warrior Fortinbras says of the dead Hamlet:

> Let four captains
> Bear Hamlet *like a soldier* to the stage,
> For he was likely, had he been put on,
> To have prov'd most royal; and for his passage,
> The soldiers' music and the *rite* of war
> Speak loudly for him.
> Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this
> Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
> (5.2.400 - 408. Emphasis added)

Thematically, Brutus's failure is demonstrated when he becomes like Caesar; his transformation proves that Caesar's Ghost is, as it claims, Brutus's evil spirit. That Hamlet becomes like his father exactly the same way that Brutus becomes like Caesar (plus the other close parallels between the two plays) must mean Shakespeare considered the transformations thematically equivalent. Therefore, Hamlet's failure is that he becomes like his father; the ghost of his father is his evil spirit. That this is Shakespeare's point is shown by one final link between the plays. Shortly after Caesar is killed, Antony says over his dead body:

> And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
> With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
> Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
> Cry "Havoc," and let slip the dogs of war,
> That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
> With carrion men, groaning for burial.
> (3.1.270-275. Emphasis added)

Here we have Caesar's spirit, "ranging for revenge" just as the Ghost of Hamlet's father will. Caesar's spirit speaks with a "monarch's voice" as Hamlet's father would. Caesar's spirit is side by side with the Greek goddess of discord and destruction, living in Hades; I have argued that the Ghost of Hamlet's father is demonic. More important, Antony labels Caesar's murder a "foul deed" - the only time the word foul is used in the play - linking it to all the "foul" deeds, crimes, and murders in *Hamlet*. But most important, when Fortinbras enters the final scene of carnage in Hamlet, almost his first words are, "This quarry cries on havoc" (5.2.369)[21] "Quarry" here means "heap of dead" and "havoc" is "a battle cry meaning "No quarter" and inciting to slaughter and pillage."[22] In *Julius Caesar*, it is not until Brutus kills Caesar that the "evil spirit" is unleashed that brings havoc. In *Hamlet*, the Ghost is present from the very beginning with his call to arms, but in exactly the same way as Caesar's ghost, he brings havoc. The ghost is Hamlet's evil spirit.

How does this illuminate Hamlet's delay ? If the Ghost is Hamlet's evil spirit - the part of him able to kill and commit "foul crimes" - then the delay immediately becomes explainable. It represents his "good" side - his poetry, his brilliance, his generosity, his moral sensibility. A single example of this side of Hamlet will suffice. Hamlet says to Polonius about the players:

> Use every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping ? Use them after your honor and dignity. The less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty.
>
> (2.2 524-527)

Apply these lines to the play. Claudius has murdered, and so if he were used "after his desert," he would deserve to die. But Hamlet rightly denounces that path. Do not sink to evil's level, he says - act only according to your own "honor and dignity." The baser they are, the more generous you are. These could almost be the words of Jesus Christ: "Judge not, that ye de not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."[23] That Shakespeare intended these words to express both his and Hamlet's moral view of the revenge seems particularly likely since he places them immediately after the Player's speech about Pyrrhus's brutal revenge. This view of the delay sets Hamlet's rational desire to avoid killing (to avoid becoming a committer of foul crimes like his father) against Hamlet's emotional loyalty to his father. While some critics seem to feel that the flaw in this view is that Shakespeare fails to make it explicit, in fact Shakespeare makes this clear over and over again.

In Hamlet's first soliloquy he wishes "the Everlasting had not fixed/ His canon 'gainst self-slaughter (1.2.131-132). Hamlet seems to be aware that the Everlasting forbids all killing.[24] In the same speech he says that "a beast that wants discourse of reason/ Would have mourned longer" than his mother. Reason is being set up against bestiality. This is the same speech where Hamlet sets up the "duality of man"[25] by comparing his father to the sun god Hyperion and his uncle to the half-man, half-beast satyr. Hamlet's soliloquy after seeing Fortinbras's army contrasts the instinctual actions of a "beast' with "godlike reason." In his "heart of hearts" speech, Hamlet again sets up "blood" against "judgement." He looks for a man that is not "passion's slave." He says to his mother in the chamber scene that at her "age, the heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble, and waits upon the judgement" (3.4.69-70). The lines from Hamlet's most famous soliloquy reinforce this point:

> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pitch and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry
> And lose the name of action.
>
> (3.1. 83-88)

Without getting into the debate as to whether the entire "To be, or not to be" speech is only about suicide, or only about Hamlet's revenge (or perhaps a bit of both), [26] it does seem safe to say that Shakespeare has made these lines particularly ambiguous. The key phrase is "enterprises of great pitch and moment." Suicide does not appear to be such an enterprise for Hamlet at this point - and in any case the plural "enterprises" has been used, which automatically generalizes these lines to all enterprises "of great pitch and moment." Surely Hamlet's revenge is far more such an enterprise than his suicide.

In that case, what do these lines mean ? We have here a conflict between the "native hue of resolution" and "thought." As Dodsworth points out, the "native hue of resolution" is "presumably his father's contribution." [27] And indeed, the Ghost had said of his murder, "If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not" (1.5.81). Hamlet's resolution - to act, to revenge - is innate or, we might say, it is passed down from his father, or it represents the part of Hamlet that is like his father. The "pale cast of thought" is clearly "reason" or "judgement" or "conscience" or moral sensibility. Hamlet says "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all." Shakespeare and Hamlet are implying that the delay is due to Hamlet's "conscience" and "the pale cast of thought" and that there is a conflict between "native resolution" and "thought." The judgement, thought, reason, and conscience are one part of Hamlet - the part that does not want to kill, the part that delays. The passion is the part that wants revenge. The passion is the part that can kill, as we have seen in Hamlet's rash killing of Polonius (and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern). Gertrude calls Polonius's murder a "rash and bloody deed," and Hamlet himself praises the "rashness" that woke him up at sea and allowed him to execute his old friends. (3.4.25 and 5.2.5).

As if to make all this clear, when Laertes rushes back to Denmark for his revenge in act four, he brings with him all the passion that Hamlet lacks, and says, "That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard" (4.5.117). All of Laertes's blood that comes from his father demands revenge. Laertes clearly has the "native hue of resolution." What of conscience ? Again Shakespeare is clear in the words he gives Laertes, "Conscience and grace to the profoundest pit ! I dare damnation" (4.5.132-133). When he sees Ophelia, he says, "O heat, dry up my brains" (4.5.154). He does not want to think. And when the King asks him what he would "undertake" to show himself his "father's son in deed more than in words ?" (4.7.124-125) Laertes instantly replies, "To cut his throat i'th 'church." Returning to Hamlet's excuse for delay, we find Hamlet wondering before he goes to sea if his delay is due to "some craven scruple of thinking too precisely on th'event" (4.4. 10-41). Yet after the sea trip, his conscience seems to be fading away. He says of the murder of his old school friends, "They are not near my conscience" (5.2.58). Then he says to Horatio that because Claudius has "killed" his father and "whored" his mother,

> is't not perfect conscience
> To quit him with this arm ? And is't not to be damn'd
> To let this canker of our nature come
> In further evil ?
>
> (5.2.67-70)

Bradley[28] says this is the first time Hamlet and Shakespeare have expressed the notion that Hamlet's conscience is the reason for his delay. I would argue that in fact it is the last time Hamlet even brings up the idea, and now he does so only to dismiss it once and for all. His conscience has finally lost.[29] Shakespeare gives him one more chance, when Horatio tries to convince him not to duel Laertes: "If your mind dislike anything, obey it" (5.2.213). But it is too late for Hamlet. His mind and his conscience are no longer in control.

To make this especially clear, Shakespeare has Laertes say in an aside, just before he stabs Hamlet, "And yet it is almost against my conscience" (5.2.300). Laertes' revenge is about to result in his own death (and perhaps damnation). In that one instant before the crime, Shakespeare is saying that if Laertes had just listened to his conscience, he would not have died.

The majority of critics notwithstanding, Shakespeare over and over again provides explicit evidence for the "conscience theory." The play is a tragedy because Hamlet's high moral sensibility, his judgement, his thought, his reason, his conscience, lose out to his blood, passion and native resolution-the part of him that is like his father, able to kill and commit foul crimes. That would make this part of him his tragic flaw. Shakespeare indicates this in the strongest possible way in the first act, when Hamlet says to Horatio,

Ham. So, oft it chances in particular men
That for some vicious mole of nature in them
As in their *birth*, wherein they are not guilty
(Since nature cannot choose his origin),
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of *reason*,
Or by some habit, that too much o'er leavens
The form of plausive manners - that these men
Carrying, I say, the stamp of *one defect*,
Being Nature's livery, or Fortune's star,
His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault. The dram of evil
Doth all the noble substance often dout
To his own scandal.

Enter Ghost

Hor. Look, my lord, it comes.

(1.4. 23-38. Emphasis added)

While these lines are often misunderstood, Shakespeare's meaning here now seems clear, in the light of the previous analysis. Like so many other speeches in the play, although Hamlet seems to be talking in generalities, he is talking about himself.[30] He is the one who loses "the form of plausive manners" and his "pales and forts of reason" begin to break down. The source is a tragic flaw (the "one defect" that destroys a man no matter what else his virtues) - a "vicious mole of nature" that comes from "their birth" - it is innate.[31] Is it not clear that the "vicious mole of nature" is the "native hue of resolution" - the same "nature" the Ghost appeals to ? To make this clear, Shakespeare says that this "nature" breaks down the "pales and forts of reason." This is the struggle that Shakespeare will repeat throughout the play, native resolution versus "pale cast of thought" - "blood" versus "judgment." This speech is about Hamlet's tragic flaw, and Shakespeare is foreshadowing the triumph of Hamlet's tragic flaw over his reason. The clincher is that Shakespeare has the Ghost enter at this precise moment: *Enter Ghost*. Horatio's line, "Look, my lord, it comes," then becomes a figurative announcement about the coming of Hamlet's tragic flaw. This is no accident. Shakespeare is showing that the Ghost of Hamlet's father is Hamlet's evil spirit, it is an embodiment of his tragic flaw.

Hamlet achieves some realization of his tragic flaw towards the end of the play when he says to Laertes,

> I prithee take thy fingers from my throat,
> For, though I am not splenitive and rash,
> Yet have I in me something dangerous,
> Which let thy wisdom fear.
> (5.1.253-256)

Yet we know Hamlet is rash - when he kills. In the very next scene he praises the "rashness" that woke him up at sea and allowed him to write the order killing his old friends. Hamlet seems to be saying in the above lines that he is not "normally" or "usually" splenitive and rash, but the "something dangerous" in him is. But we know that this is the part of Hamlet that is opposed to his reason and thought. Hamlet seems to understand this too because he tells Laertes that Laertes's "wisdom" should fear this part. And finally, in Hamlet's famous "apology" to Laertes, Hamlet says that "Hamlet" has not offended Laertes (by killing Polonius) but his "madness" has, and he calls his madness, "poor Hamlet's enemy." If we consider "madness" as the opposite of "reason," "judgment," and "thought" then we can see Hamlet stating Shakespeare's theme once again.

All the pieces come together in the final minutes of the play. Hamlet is treacherously poisoned, as his father was. Laertes is stabbed by Hamlet and "hoist with his own petard," as Polonius was. When we hear Laertes say "The foul practice hath turned itself on me" we might think back to the "foul crimes" of the Ghost, or his "foul" murder, of the "foul disease" that Hamlet was to Claudius.

Elsinore has been turned into a battlefield. Fortinbras's army enters. Hamlet is carried away "like a soldier" and he receives "the soldier's music." The peal of ordnance is shot off. Hamlet has become like his father and joined him, but, I think, not in heaven. [32] The part of Hamlet that came from his father, the bestial or satyr-like passion that kills and commits foul crimes, has triumphed over his god-like reason, his moral sensibility, and his conscience. One of the greatest souls in literature has been destroyed by his father's evil quest for revenge.

NOTES

1. Harold Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicogo: University of Chicago Press, 1951) p. 381.

2. In one form or another, this view of Hamlet's procrastination as a weakness or a flaw in his character is the "orthodox line of Hamlet criticism" - C.S. Lewis, "Hamlet, The Prince or the Poem?" *Hamlet: Enter Critic*, ed. C. Sacks and E. Whan (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960), p. 171. Lewis says this view "boasts the names of Richardson, Goethe, Coleridge, Schlegel, and Hazlitt." John Dover Wilson supports a similar view in Chapter Six of *What Happens in Hamlet* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967). A.C. Bradley speaks of Hamlet's delay as due to "melancholic paralysis" in *Shakespearean Tragedy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985) p. 107.

3. All references to *Hamlet* follow the act, scene, and line numbers of the Arden Edition, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982).

4. For the quoted lines, see George Santayana's "Hamlet" in *Essays in Literary Criticism of George Santayana* ed. Irving Singer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956) p. 125. Eleanor Prosser devotes Chapters Four and Five of *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967) to arguing that each of these "clues" would have made the Elizabethan audience think the Ghost was evil.

5. Looking at his father's picture Hamlet says, "See what a grace was seated on this brow: Hyperion's curls . . . ." (3.4. 55-56).

6. Prosser (n.4 above) p. 113, quotes these lines. Kenneth Muir in *Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1972) p.58, argues that this cannot be Shakespeare's point in *Hamlet* because he never makes it explicit. But, as I argue, Shakespeare does.

7. See Prosser, (n.4 above).

8. This view dates back to Dr. Johnson's famous line that this speech is "too horrible to be read or to be uttered," p. 181 Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," *Hamlet: Enter Critic* (n.2 above) p.118. Prosser (n.4 above) 183-191, cites numerous tragedies of the period to argue that Renaissance stage tradition supports this view of Hamlet's excuse.

9. The Ghost said it was horrible that he was killed with "No reck'ning made." But this is exactly how Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern are killed.

10. Laertes had said to Ophelia, "in the morn and liquid dew of youth/ Contagious blastments are most imminent" (3.3.41-42). These lines foreshadow the fate of both Hamlet and Laertes, for Laertes says of the poison that will ultimately kiill them both, "I'll touch my point/ With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly, it may be death" (4.7.145).

11. Goddard (n.1 above), p.350.

12. Ibid, pp.350-351.

13. Prosser (n.4 above) pp.151-152.

14. Nigel Alexander, *Poison, Play, and Duel* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) p. 73.

15. Wilson (n.2 above) pp.253-255.

16. Jenkins (n.3 above), p.326, says "alarm" is literally the "call to arms." The Ghost's visits to Hamlet may be seen as a call to take arms against Claudius.

17. All references to *Julius Caesar* follow the act, scene, and line numbers of the Arden Edition, ed. T.S. Dorsch (London: Methuen, 1955).

18. Goddard (n.1 above), pp. 317-318.

19. Matthew Proser, *The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) pp. 43-45. Proser also compares Caesar's "I could be well mov'd" speech (3.1.58-60) with Brutus's "Must I budge" speech (4.3.44-46) and Caesar's and Brutus's use of the word "Olympus" (3.1.74 and 4.3.91). Proser writes that "Brutus in obtaining something of a Caesar's power (indeed of Caesar's power) becomes, despite himself, something like Caesar."

20. Dorsch, op.cit. p. viii says *Julius Caesar* was probably written in 1599, and Jenkins (n.3 above), p.1 implies that most of *Hamlet* was, too. While *Hamlet* is usually dated a little after Julius Caesar, my analysis here suggests that some portions of both were written at about the same time.

21. Prosser, (n. 4 above) pp. 235-236, cites Fortinbras's line and Antony's and says, "the comment implies that Hamlet's revenge has led him to wanton and meaningless slaughter."

22. Jenkins p. 416 (n.3 above)

23. Matthew, VII; 1-3.

24. Jenkins (n. 3 above) p. 187: "Commentators have puzzled unnecessarily over this; for while a 'divine' prohibition may be easier to accept than demonstrate, what is easily demonstrated is that the church regularly regarded 'self-slaughter' as forbidden by the sixth commandment."

25. Jenkins (n. 3 above) p. 129, writes of the Hyperion/Satyr image: "this early image vividly suggests to us that dual nature of man upon which Hamlet will repeatedly reflect. We must never forget that the two are brothers."

26. For discussions, see Jenkins (n.3 above), pp. 484-90 and Prosser (n. 4 above), p. 159.

27. Martin Dodsworth, *Hamlet Closely Observed*, (London: Athlone Press, 1985) p.111.

28. Bradley (n. 2 above), pp. 77-78.

29. Jenkins (n. 2 above) p. 398, defines "canker" as "a spreading sore' and so the phrase "canker of our nature" means a "corruption inherent in our nature." This phrase is thus reminiscent of the "native hue of resolution" and the "foul disease" that afflicts Hamlet, his father, and his uncle.

30. Wilson (n.2 above), p. 207: "it is no accident of the press...that leads the speaker to pass from the plural to the singular. He is thinking of himself, or rather, Shakespeare is asking us to think of him."

31. Shakespeare repeats this idea in various forms. Laertes says of Hamlet, "his will is not his own. For he himself is subject to his birth" (1.3.17-18) After meeting the Ghost, Hamlet becomes convinced that the "time is out of joint" and that he was "born to set it right ! "

32. Both Hamlet and his father have committed foul crimes. The Ghost is being punished in a "prison house." Hamlet says as he dies, "this fell sergeant, Death. Is strict in his arrest" (5.2.341-342). Hamlet will apparently join his father in his prison.

Waiting in *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*

ARNOLD W. PREUSSNER

One of the most important recent approaches to Shakespearean tragedy is that propounded by Susan Snyder in *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies*.[1] According to Snyder, it would have been quite logical for Shakespeare to use the dramatic conventions with which he was most familiar - those of romantic comedy - as points of departure in developing tragic forms (p.4). This essay will investigate one particular comic "matrix," that of waiting or delay, as it crosses generic boundaries from *Twelfth Night* to the nearly contemporaneous *Hamlet*. At first glance, Shakespeare simply seems to be undercutting the comic motif of the triumph of time in *Hamlet* in order to reveal its 'shadow side.' And yet there is an uncanny parallel between Viola's assumption that time, not she herself, must untangle the "knot" of her predicament and Hamlet's fifth-act statements on the "divinity that shapes our ends" and the "special providence in the fall of a sparrow," as well as in his famous pronouncement that "the readiness is all." Of course, like the proverbial sparrow, Hamlet falls. Nevertheless, my reading will suggest that it is precisely the appropriation of the comic device of delay by both dramatist and protagonist that facilitates Hamlet's rescue from the tragic revenge plot in which he appears embroiled for most of the play.

I

The motif of delay is crucial to comic genres ranging from farce to romance. In farcical-'errors' comedies such as Plautus's *Menaechmi* and Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* the much delayed but inevitable encounter of identical twins provides the basic plot mechanism. Shakespeare uses the device in *Twelfth Night*, placing Viola and Sebastian in Illyria for a period of three months without allowing them to encounter each other. Their non-exposition, accomplished by keeping Sebastian off stage for most of the play's opens up the dramatic space needed to enact the cross-wooing plot of Orsino, Olivia, and Viola-Cesario. Sebastian eventually joins the principals and, to the accompaniment of the customary series of mistakings, assumes the male role that Cesario must ultimately vacate. Brother and sister are reunited, and each finds a desirable mate. On the low-comic level, the household revellers set their trap for Malvolio and then wait for him to take the bait. Their efforts are soon rewarded, and Malvolio, after waiting upon Olivia in crossgarters, is hauled off to the dark room, from which he must await deliverance. As Lord of Misrule, Sir Toby inhabits a world almost completely devoid of the constraints of time, where "not to be a-bed after midnight is to be up betimes" (2.3.1-2).[2] For Sir Toby, life is a constant effort to delay the end of merrymaking, to keep the "virtuous" forever from infringing on his "cakes and ale" (2.3.114-16).

On the romantic level of *Twelfth Night*, delay is primarily a function of Olivia's refusal of her favours to the love-smitten Orsino. Viola notes the obvious analogue between Olivia and the "fair, proud" mistress of the Elizabethan sonnet sequence, whose aloofness and cruelty conventionally cause her admirer endless delay and infinite emotional pain. Olivia is, to be sure, mourning the death of her brother, but this ritual enactment of a postponed re-entry into the affairs of everyday life is all but forgotten as her infatuation with "Cesario" overwhelms her. Like Orsino, the low-comic lover Sir Andrew Aguecheek must await an upturn in his fortunes, one which we (and his financial beneficiary Sir Toby) know will never come. At play's end, neither Orsino nor Sir Andrew is rewarded by the fair lady they have both attempted to woo: Sir Andrew is rudely dispatched by Sir Toby while Orsino's love deflects onto Viola. And Malvolio, whose mock-courtship has given the play its central satiric focus, speaks for all frustrated characters whose perseverance proves fruitless when he vows to be "reveng'd on the whole pack of you" and then storms off stage (5.1.378). Malvolio's curse represents the obverse of the traditional romance pattern, which after many delays, deferrals, and "dilations," brings the action to the outcome most desired by both the audience and the most sympathetic characters.[3] In Shakespeare's romantic "transformation" of Latin New Comedy, the protagonists invariably get "more, and better, than they bargained for."[4]

Within the basic paradigm of *Twelfth Night* as enactment of delayed gratification, Viola's waiting game merits special attention. Unlike other, more assertive Shakespearean heroines such as Portia, Rosalind, and the Helena of *All's Well*, Viola at the inception of her plan to serve Orsino in male disguise commits "what else may hap" to the governance of time (1.2.60). Later, she acknowledges that the three-sided dilemma posed by her "desperate" love for her master, Orsino's "hapless" infatuation with Olivia, and Olivia's emerging passion for "Cesario" constitutes a "knot" that only time has the power to untangle (2.2.36-41). Of course, it is inaccurate to say that Viola does nothing whatsoever to untangle the knot herself. Among other things, she reveals to Orsino the history of her father's mysterious daughter who "lov'd a man/As it might be perhaps, were I a woman,/I should your lordship" (2.4.107-09). Her depiction of the young woman who "never told her love," but rather "sat like Patience on a monument,/Smiling at grief" (2.4.110-15) provides an obvious analogue to her own current predicament

And her notification of Orsino that she is "all the daughters of my father's house" (2.4.120) hints both at her true identity and at her love for the duke. At the play's conclusion, Orsino seizes upon this long-embedded hint and makes Viola his "mistress, and his fancy's queen" (5.1.388) even before he has had a chance to see her in female attire. In the meantime, "Cesario's" attractiveness to Olivia paves the way for Sebastian's good fortune. Thus the deferral of Viola's true identity, forced upon her at the outset, ultimately functions as a profound benefit for both the shipwrecked twins.

II

It is Hamlet's misfortune to be cast in a play in which delay is the key structural and thematic element, but whose generic orientation is tragic rather than comic. In *Hamlet* delay is simultaneously the hero's primary psychological determinant, the dramatist's chief structural device, and a telling force in shaping the play's overall mood.[5] These multiple uses of delay produce a dramatic action markedly antithetical to the Elizabethan tradition of revenge tragedy in which the hero sweeps swiftly and single-mindedly to his revenge, often destroying himself in the process. (True, Revenge does fall asleep during the fourth act of *The Spanish Tragedy*, but this dormancy only underscores the urgency of Hieronimo's undertaking.) The delays of *Hamlet* give the play a curious structural kinship with the open-ended evitability of comedy. Obviously, the motif of delay does not fulfill its normal comic function in *Hamlet*, whose protagonist is as much a "fool of time" as is any other tragic hero.[6] Rather, Shakespeare's delaying tactics allow him to "deconstruct" his inherited generic conventions and to substitute for them a radically different tragic pattern, one that is both more intellectually complex and, ultimately, more optimistic and humane than its predecessor, the Elizabethan revenge play.

Hamlet's first appearance in the play is itself twice delayed, first by the opening scene in which the ghost appears to others but not to him (as Frank Kermode notes, 170 of the scene's 175 lines are spoken before the name of young Hamlet is mentioned), and again by the 64 lines of court business in 1.2 which precede Hamlet's verbal entrance. Once having joined the court conversation, Hamlet must endure Claudius's extended attempt at consolation over the death of his father, a speech couched in appeals to the "long view" of time and the inevitability of death (1.2.87 ff.). Like Olivia at the beginning of *Twelfth Night*, Hamlet persists in what Claudius calls his "impious stubbornness," his unwillingness to put aside his grief and rejoin society. Instead, he dwells upon the lack of delay, as well as the supposedly incestuous status of his mother's "o'erhasty" remarriage, telescoping the waiting period in the first soliloquy from two months to "not so much, not two," to "within a month . . . a little month" (1.2.138,145-47). As he tells Horatio in a similarly telescoped image, "the funeral bak'd meats/Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (1.2.180-81). Comedy traditionally works from impending doom or recently experienced grief to the onset of unexpected happiness. Hamlet's imagery here yokes the two polar opposites of sorrow and joy into one tension-ridden concept, just as Claudius has already done for a different reason in acknowledging the "mirth in funeral" and "dirge in marriage" attendant upon his alliance with Gertrude (1.2.12). While Sir Toby attempts to obliterate time through drink and revelry, both Hamlet and Claudius undermine time-based distinctions regarding social custom, as well as the generic conventions based on those distinctions. Their radical mingling of tragic and comic points, perhaps, to the equally radical generic destabilization that Hamlet's, and Shakespeare's, waiting games will have upon the play.

When Hamlet learns from Horatio of the presence of his father's ghost, he resolves to speak to it as soon as posible, "though hell itself should gape/ And bid me hold my peace" (1.2.244-45). Yet between this resolution and its execution Shakespeare interposes the multiple (and rather tedious) counselling sessions of the Polonius family: Laertes cautions Ophelia to preserve her honor; Polonius offers his famous words of advice to Laertes, and then, after asking Ophelia what Laertes has said to her, denounces Hamlet's "tenders" of affection. Immediately after Hamlet's confrontation with the ghost, Polonius reappears on stage with more words of advice, this time for his servant Reynaldo on how best to obtain information on Laertes' activities in Paris.[7] All of these interchanges are related to the comic *consilium* or speech of domestic advice, a staple of both Latin New Comedy and Shakespeare's own comedies of the 1590's.[8] Shakespeare thus appears to be utilizing a comic device in order both to retard and surround the scene from which the remainder of the tragic plot will proceed. As a further variation on comic convention, we have the king's keeping of wassail, noted by Hamlet and Horatio in 1.4, which may call to mind the equally "heavy-headed" carousing of Sir Toby in the early acts of *Twelfth Night*.

The confrontation with the ghost sets in motion the first of Hamlet's two schemes to cope with his new knowledge - the "antic disposition." One recent critic has noted a parallel between Hamlet's attempt to disguise his emotions and the male disguise habitually assumed by many of Shakespeare's comic heroines.[9] However, as an "antic" his behavior also overlaps with that of the court jester. As a combined Feste and Viola, then, Hamlet runs verbal rings around Polonius and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and appears in Ophelia's closet disguised as a distracted lover (2.1.74-81). Although Hamlet's stockings are reportedly ungartered rather than cross-gartered, his appearance does offer both a structural parallel and a generic inversion of Malvolio's appearance before Olivia. While the steward makes an unintentionally ludicrous attempt at courtship, the prince affects a pose designed both to perplex his mistress and to drive her to her father for further counselling, thus guaranteeing dissemination of the news of his altered state throughout the court. When Hamlet follows up this appearance in the "get thee to a nunnery" interchange, his words are those of a bitter, self and woman-hating satirist who proclaims that "we will have no moe marriage"(3.1.147). Here the comic *consilium*, earlier used as a foil and delaying mechanism surrounding the ghost's appearance to Hamlet, becomes a direct means of subverting the basic comic values of love, marriage, and community.

It is difficult to ascertain just what Hamlet hopes to accomplish through his "antics."[10] He succeeds primarily in drawing attention to himself, just as he also does in his second stratagem, the "play within." "The Murder of Gonzago" is itself a delaying mechanism in terms of the conventional revenge plot, since it serves not to execute revenge, as its prototype does in *The Spanish Tragedy*, but rather to test the veracity of the ghost's story. Hamlet does apparently succeed in catching "the conscience of the king" (3.1.605), but also reveals his own suspicions to Claudius, as many critics have pointed out (see e.g. Kermode 1139). The play-within leads directly to the most famous postponed action in English drama, Hamlet's decision to spare Claudius in the prayer scene, and then to the closet scene with Gertrude. After the stabbing of Claudius's surrogate Polonius through the arras, the closet scene develops into another ironic version of the comic *consilium*, with Hamlet making a second specific application of his earlier anti-marriage remarks to Ophelia. In Hamlet's urging of his mother to refrain from her husband's bed, he among other things attempts to impose a lesser punishment on Claudius than the ultimate act of revenge that he has just deferred in the prayer scene. Thus revenge is not so much delayed as partially and temporarily redirected through the medium of Hamlet's harsh *consilium*.[11]

After the closet scene with Gertrude, Hamlet temporarily loses the ability to influence events at Elsinore as Claudius dispatches him to England. Upon his return, recounted in an implausible narrow-escape narrative worthy of Shakespearean romance, comedy once again interrupts and delays tragic action, this time in the form of the lengthy interchange in 5.1 between Hamlet and the gravedigger in which Hamlet's thoughts range far from his ongoing crisis to his childhood relationship with the court jester Yorick. However, by 5.2 Hamlet appears once again intent on revenge, as is evident in his summary of Claudius's sins (63ff.). After protesting to Horatio that not to act would be damnable, Hamlet claims as his own the short interim before the English messengers arrive. But this interim is in fact not his. It is filled, rather, with the play's final delaying tactic, the outrageously tedious "dilation" of Osric, within which is embedded the invitation to Claudius's version of the

"Mousetrap." If we make allowances for the events surrounding Ophelia's burial, we may note that Shakespeare's technique of sandwiching Hamlet's final statement of his commitment to revenge in between the scenes with the gravedigger and Osric closely resembles his earlier placement of the pivotal ghost scene between scenes dramatizing the affairs of the Polonius household.

III

As the play approaches its long-delayed climax, Hamlet utters the three remarks which, as I have already suggested, may bear some resemblance to the ideas of comic perseverance and deliverance that we found Viola enunciating in *Twelfth Night* . The first of these, Hamlet's new-found (or at least newly expressed) belief in a "divinity that shapes our ends," occurs in the context of the prince's praise of his rashness and indiscretion in discovering the king's secret "commission" that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had been carrying to England. The image associated with this discovery is one of liberation from a state akin to that of "the mutines in the [bilboes]" (5.2.7), certainly an accurate visual analogue to Hamlet's doom should he have reached England and one of the few positive images of release in the entire play. At the same time, Hamlet's belief in an all-powerful and, in this instance, beneficent divinity is not yet free from his belief in himself as an avenging spirit. As he tells Horatio, he has substituted the interchangeable twin-like characters of "errors" comedy, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, for himself, stipulating that, like his father, they be "put to sudden death,/Not shriving time allow'd" (5.2.46-47). As Polonius died earlier in place of Claudius, so Claudius's emissaries will die as surrogates for Hamlet, with their souls as vulnerable to eternal punishment as that of the ghost of old Hamlet.

In Hamlet's recounting of his shipboard discovery and adventure with the pirates, we see a dual attitude of belief in divine providence and continued faith in his mission as revenger. But by the time we reach Hamlet's second and third significant pronouncements, both actually part of the same speech, the revenge portion of this attitude has vanished. Hamlet obviously distrusts Claudius's invitation - it arouses something "ill" in his heart (5.2.212) - and yet he takes no precautionary measures. Rather , he defies augury, cites the "special providence in the fall of a sparrow" proclaimed by Jesus in Matthew 10:29, and declares that "the readiness is all"(5.2.219-22). At this moment, just before his fatal engagement with Laertes, Hamlet arrives at the point of fullest congruence with Viola's determination that time and circumstance, not human agents themselves, must control human destiny. Although Hamlet has couched the idea in specifically Christian termonology, the circumstances themselves have been tragically altered.

Hamlet's decision to play Claudius's and Laertes's game seals his earthly fate, as well as that of all the remaining principal characters except Horatio. Even so, the decision proves to be profoundly beneficial for Hamlet's character and status. For Hamlet's calm acceptance of the king's end-game confers on him a truly noble personality in the play's final scene, one that contrasts markedly with the passionate avenger who stabbed Polonius and the calculating counter-plotter who arranged the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. It is this "noble" figure with whom Laertes seeks to exchange forgiveness, and whose urging prevents Horatio from committing suicide. Hamlet's decision not to attack Claudius until the evidence against him becomes overwhelming - and until Claudius has in fact demonstrably committed further crimes - ensures that Horatio will have an honorable "cause" to report "to the unsatisfied" (5.2.338-39). In sum, Hamlet's assumption of the passive stance advocated by Viola both confers upon him the dignity of the tragic hero and provides a cross-generic analogue to the growth in understanding and emotional maturity ascribed by C.L. Barber to the leading characters in Shakespeare's "festive" comedies.[12]

Hamlet's final atitude is not necessarily analogous to the "modern" feeling of satisfaction supposedly attendant upon the attainment of a reasonably well-integrated personality. Rather, as J. V. Cunningham has reminded us, it is much closer to the medieval sense that "man dies when God is ready," and that like Everyman, we should be prepared to meet "this fell sergeant Death" at a moment's notice.[13] Even so, Hamlet's final choice of a passive, waiting attitude allows us to see his past delays as the correct decisions, even though confusedly or even wrongly motivated. The clearest example of this perspective may be found in a reconsideration of the prayer scene. Using Hamlet's final state of mind as a perspective for critical hindsight, we now realize that in refusing to kill the king and dispatch his recently confessed soul (or so Hamlet thinks) to heaven, Hamlet does the right thing for the wrong reason. Responding in a manner identical to that of the typical revenger of Elizabethan tragedy, who wishes not only to kill his victim but also to guarantee the victim's eternal damnation, Hamlet nevertheless refuses to take justice into his own hands.[14] This refusal to act, assumed by so many critics simply to be symptomatic of his tragic indecision,[15] instead may be said to function as the chief emblematic device foreshadowing Hamlet's eventual "rescue" from his commitment to revenge. Clearly, the moment functions as the symbolic fulcrum upon which the play swings.

Extending our analysis back to the ghost's call for vengeance, we may now fully sense the incompatibility of the spirit's purgatorial condition and his demand for bloody deeds. This insight, in turn, helps to explain the omission of any direct reference to the now irrelevant ghost from the final act. In a sense, Hamlet's own spirit has been condemned to suffer agonies analogous to those of his father. In the final sequence of events, Hamlet successfully completes his "purgation" and frees himself from the interior turmoil that the ghost's exhortations objectify.

The device of delay, then, operates on several levels in *Hamlet*. On its most obvious level, it produces the pain and frustration evident in Hamlet's tortured soliloquies, ironic *consilia*, and mordant reflections on Yorick's skull. On a less obvious structural level, Shakespeare himself uses delaying tactics to bring Hamlet through a living hell to a final resting point at which revenge is no longer delayed but rather gives way entirely to calm acceptance and the divinely comic implications of Christian stoicism. In the play's final sequence of events, Hamlet implicitly dismisses the commitment to which he has previously adhered, in thought and word if not in deed. As a result, the dramatic action to which such a commitment inevitably leads also vanishes. Hamlet thus kills Claudius not as a lone avenger and self-appointed "scourge of God," but rather acts with the full assent of the stage community, as given voice in Laertes' final assertion that "the King, the King's to blame," to which the other characters respond with "Treason ! treason !" (5.2.320, 322). Hamlet's concluding statements and actions may therefore be regarded as constituting the final step in a "deconstruction" of the dramatically compelling but ethically problematic genre of revenge tragedy. Without Shakespeare's appropriation of the comic device of delay, such a "deconstruction" would have been all but impossible.

NOTES

1. (Princeton: Princeton (Univ. Pr.,1979). See also Kathleen Latimer," 'Tragical-comical-historical-pastoral': Generic Patterns in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "*Legacy of Thespis: Drama Past and Present, Vol. IV* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984) 43-52.

2. All quotations from Shakespeare cite *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans)Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

3. On the romance pattern of delay and "dilation" as a crucial constituent of Renaissance narrative and dramatic form, see Patricia Parker, "Deferral, Dilation, Differance: Shakespeare, Cervantes, Jonson," *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986) 182-209.

4. Ruth Nevo, *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare* (New York: Methuen, 1980) 3.

5. For an excellent summary of delay as a psychological, structural, and modal device in *Hamlet*, see Frank Kermode's introduction to the play in the *Riverside* edition, 1137-38. As Kermode notes, *Hamlet* is "a delaying play at least as surely as Hamlet himself is a delaying revenger" (1138).

6. See Northrop Frye, *Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearean Tragedy* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967).

7. Acording to John L. Murphy, Polonius's instructions to Reynaldo are primarily intended to sound out the political sentiments of the Danish community in Paris, thus giving the exchange a deeper level of significance than the comic surface would indicate ("Politics and Anti-Politics in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," paper presented at the 1987 Central Renaissance Conference, St. Louis, MO, Mar. 26-28, 1987).

8. On the *consilium* as a stock feature of Latin comedy, see Marvin T. Herrick, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century* (1950; rpt. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1964) 14-15. Luciana's advice to Adriana and to Antipholus of Syracuse (whom she mistakenly believes to be her brother-in-law) in the *Comedy of Errors* serve as excellent examples of Shakespeare's use of the comic *consilium*.

9. Jean Macintyre, "Hamlet and the Comic Heroine," *Hamlet Studies* 4(1982) 11ff.

10. It is worth noting that Robert E. Burkhart, who argues against the notion of an indecisive, delaying Hamlet, offers no specific rationale for the "antic disposition" ("Hamlet: Is He Still Delaying?" *Hamlet Studies* 5 {1984} 81-86). Burkhart grounds his argument on G.B. Harrison's assertion that the answer to the question of Hamlet's delay "is that in the play which Shakespeare wrote there was no delay" (*Shakespeare's Tragedies* {New York: Oxford Univ. Pr. 1969} 109.

11. Hamlet's plea to Gertrude to avoid Claudius's bed and thereby "assume a virtue, if you have it not" (3.4.160) is curiously similar to Luciana's advice to her supposed brother-in-law to "be secret false" to his wife and assume the manner if not the actual conduct of a faithful husband (*Comedy of Errors* 3.2.1ff.). In both cases, an outward display of seeming virtue is advocated.

12. See *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton Univ. Pr., 1959). As Craig A. Bernthal notes, "Hamlet has changed, during the course of the play, from the man who seems trapped in introspection to one who has broken out of it into a state of receptiveness, heightened awareness and calm" ("'Self' Examination and Readiness in *Hamlet*" *Hamlet Studies* 7 {1985} 39.

13. "Ripeness is All," *The Collected Essays of J.V. Cunningham* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1976) 1-8, cited Bernthal 39.

14. See Eleanor Prosser's analysis of the prayer scene in *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Pr., 1971) 185-93. As Prosser notes, "Hamlet stays his hand, but his reason is frightful" (188).

15. See, e.g., A.C. Bradley's influential assertiont hat Hamlet's failure to act in the prayer scene "is the cause of all the disasters that follow. In sparing the king, he sacrifices Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Laertes, the Queen and himself" (*Shakespearean Tragedy* {1904; rpt. Greenwich, Conn,: Fawcett, 1968} 115.

16. On *Hamlet* as a play that deliberately underscores the outworn, "archaic" nature of revenge conventions, see Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Representation* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1977) 44-67.

NOTES

The Theatricality of the First Quarto of *Hamlet*

DAVID E. JONES

It is clear that we are at the beginning of a new era in Shakespeare scholarship, an era in which it is recognized that his plays are primarily texts intended for performance. One of the clearest of these signs is the criterion for the most recent Complete Shakespeare, the Oxford edition: "This edition chooses, when possible, to print the more theatrical version of each play."[1] Of course, the battle against a primarily literary orientation will continue because theatrical values are much harder to pin down than literary ones. They tend to evaporate outside rehearsal and performance. Even so, one is dismayed to find Philip Edwards, editor of the 1985 New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of *Hamlet* making the point: "The nearer we get to the stage, the further we are getting from Shakespeare." Let me hasten to acknowledge that he is not making this as a general point but rather as part of his argument that the "ideal version" of this play "does not exist in either of the two main authoritative texts, the second quarto and the Folio, but somewhere between them."[2] Starting from what, I would suggest, is a sounder asumption, "The nearer we get to performance as Shakespeare envisaged it, the more definitive the text," I want to make the counter-argument that the "ideal version" exists somewhere between the Folio and the First Quarto.

Although I am not competent to make my argument on the basis of textual study and shall attempt rather to make it on the basis of theatrical viability, I need as prelude to summarize my deductions from the textual studies of others. Of the three earliest editions of *Hamlet*, the first to be printed, the First Quarto (Q1), almost certainly represents the latest state of the text, being a memorial reconstruction of an abridgement of the play made for staging.[3] In spite of a text that is often distressingly garbled, it is the only one of the three texts that we can be sure corresponded to a production in Shakespeare's lifetime. And that means that it provides our only clues to the first production, which would have been overseen by Shakespeare himself. The likelihood that the Q1 order of scenes represents changes made by Shakespeare in the course of staging the play gains support from the order of scenes in *Der bestrafte Brudermod*, a far more corrupt version that was toured by English players in Germany, but again one that we know was played.

The Second Quarto (Q2) is generally acknowledged to be based upon Shakespeare's foul papers, which must have been very hard to read. They seem to have contained a number of passages marked for deletion, but the compositor ignored or overlooked those markings.[4] This is fortunate in that it gives us passages which we would not otherwise have and provides some insight into Shakespeare's creative process. (On this occasion at least, he seems to have let his imagination run rather free and then trimmed to what was practicable for the stage.) But if Q2 does not help us to understand precisely what Shakespeare envisaged on-stage, the text printed in the First Folio (F1) takes us a step in that direction. It probably goes back to a transcript intermediate between the foul papers and the prompt-book, a transcript made by the Book-keeper for the King's Men, who was familiar not only with playhouse practice but also with Shakespeare's handwriting, as the compositors of Q2 were not. He understood Shakespeare's deletion-markings and began to make decisions about the details of staging and the size of the cast, but he did not cut to performance-length or finalize staging details.[5] The fact that some of the cuts made from Q2 to F1 coincide with the abridgement represented by Q1 reinforces the theory that Q1 represents the latest state of the text.

The crucial difference between F1 and Q1 is the order of scenes. The divergence begins in II.ii when Polonius, having just reported to Claudius and Gertrude Hamlet's seemingly distraught visit to Ophelia in her closet, proposes a stratagem for discovering whether Hamlet's behavior stems from "neglected love." (I should explain that, since I am trying to make a case for the Q1 order of scenes, but not the Q1 text, I shall generally quote the F1 text.) Here is the passage just before the divergence:

POLONIUS

You know sometimes he walks four hours together
Here in the lobby.

GERTRUDE

So he does indeed.

POLONIUS

As such a time I'll loose my daughter to him
(*To Claudius*) Be you and I behind an arras then.
Mark the encounter. If he love her not,
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,

Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.

CLAUDIUS

We will try it

(II.ii.162-71)

In F1 this stratagem is not put into effect until the next scene, which, because II.ii is so long, comes well over 400 lines later. In Q1, however, Hamlet chances by at this very moment and the stratagem can be put into effect immediately with the consequence that "To be or not to be" and the nunnery scene occur *before* "O what a rogue and peasant slave."

Hamlet's chancing by so opportunely may look just too pat of course, but the situation has been so carefully prepared right down to the idea of hiding behind an arras that it seems almost as odd that in F1 he does not. Certainly there are many such pat coincidences in Shakespeare, and much is gained by this coincidence: it makes for a tighter integration of the plot, more meaningful interaction of the characters, and a more coherent psychic development in Hamlet himself. I hasten to add that the three aspects are so closely interwoven that they can only be separated out on a superficial level.

In Q1 the decisive phase in the break-down of the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia occurs in something like a continuous action since the nunnery scene follows hard upon his visit to her closet. Possibly he has decided that, until his mission of revenge has been completed, he must break off all normal relationships and so has assumed his "antic disposition," thinking it will scare her off, and perhaps thinking also that, like the dutiful daughter she is, she will tell her father, and that he, being the officious servant of the Crown he is, will report to the King and so create the aura of madness that will provide opportunities for detection and vengeance. Alternatively, Hamlet may be so deeply disturbed by the Ghost's visit and the mission imposed upon him that his behaviour is genuine distraction. Either way, the rejection of Ophelia is a logical prelude to the carrying out of the mission, leaving Hamlet free to concentrate on the stratagem of the Mousetrap, which Q1 presents as a more continuous action too.

The interaction between Hamlet and Polonius just before Hamlet's encounter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern becomes much more pointed when it follows the nunnery scence. It is no longer just a manifestation of Hamlet's "antic disposition." Hamlet now believes that Polonius has used his daughter against him, and the references to "fishmonger" and "conception" (II.ii.175, 185) and later to Jephthah (403-12) carry a greater weight: "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't" (206).

In its Q1 location "To be or not to be" connects with the reluctance that suddenly surfaced at the end of the aftermath to the encounter with the Ghost, which was the last time we saw Hamlet:

> The time is out of joint. O cursed spite
> That ever I was born to set it right !
>
> (I.v.189-90)

In fact, the earlier location for "To be or not to be" favours a different interpretation than the later one. Since it comes much sooner after "O that this too solid flesh would melt" (I..11.129) we are more likely to remember that there Hamlet acknowledged that "the Everlasting" had "fixed his canon 'gainst self-slaughter." The phrase "To be or not to be" does not refer to the possibility of suicide, and the reference to suicide later in the speech is generalized - life is so full of frustration that more people would commit suicide if it were not for "the dread of something after death." No, as Stephen Coleman, a former colleague of mine, has written, "the line 'To be or not to be, that is the question,' for all its existential resonance, merely serves to introduce the terms of Hamlet's dilemma:"

> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
> And by opposing end them.

Hamlet is deliberating whether he should stoically absorb the knowledge of the murder of his father or take action and avenge him. Taking such drastic action always involves the risk of being killed, which makes him hesitate because "in that sleep of death" fearful "dreams" may follow. So he continues to the realization that the very act of thinking like this is in itself deflecting him from action.

In the nunnery scene, another link is forged in the chain of betrayal. Hamlet already feels betrayed by his mother, perhaps by his uncle - though there is no evidence that he ever trusted Claudius - and now he feels betrayed by Ophelia and Polonius ("where's your father ?"). Polonius' betrayal, if that is how he sees it, is aggravated in the "fishmonger" scene as Hamlet senses an attempt to manipulate him still further. And finally he feels betrayed by his old friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "Were you not sent for ?" (II.ii.175). The arrival of the Players brings an apparent diversion which actually puts Hamlet back on track. Here are more old friends but not so close and therefore not so liable to hurt by betrayal; they are even willing to help by playing "The Murder of Gonzago" and learning an insert.

So Hamlet arrives at "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I ! (II.ii.551). His self-rebuke for not having killed Claudius yet has more point in the Q1 order if only because there is a sense that more time has elapsed. It may have even more point if the line in the nunnery scene "Those that are married already, all but one, shall live" indicates that Hamlet suspects Claudius is within hearing and has an opportunity to kill him. In any case, Hamlet is the more liable to round on himself if he has already recognized the danger of thinking himself out of action in "To be or not to be." All in all, then, the Q1 order of the two soliloquies is psychologically more coherent and constitutes a clearer build.

In fairness, I should note two problems that the Q1 order presents. The first is the presence of Ophelia in the scene where Polonius reports to Claudius and Gertrude the incident of Hamlet's visit to her closet. By the standards of Shakespeare's time perhaps a dutiful daughter could be allowed to stand by silent and unquestioned while an issue in which she was so deeply implicated was discussed. Nowadays, she would be questioned even if she chose to remain silent. It is possible that Shakespeare himself decided against including her in the scene and substituted the letter as a cleaner way of demonstrating Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia. If so, he forgot to adjust Polonius' line "Come, go with me to the King" (II.i.118), and the reporter or reporters responsible for Q1 forgot that she had been omitted from the scene. In any case, she is needed for the confrontation with Hamlet. There are at least two solutions to the problem. Ophelia can enter with Polonius according to the Q1 stage direction and, if the actress' characterization allows it, can remain embarrassedly silent throughout the dialogue between Polonius, Claudius and Gertrude, and, if the characterization does not allow that, she can be left "outside" the audience chamber until Polonius says "At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him," when he can go to the entrance and beckon her to come in just before Hamlet makes his entry from another direction "poring upon a book."

A greater problem is Hamlet's quick return after the nunnery scene. If that scene ends, as it often does, on an emotional peak, the audience may find it difficult to accept his coming back so soon reading a book. (The book is necessary for "What do you read, my lord ?") It may be possible to suggest a lapse of time (Hamlet, it has been said, walks "four hours together / Here in the lobby," II.ii.160). Or if the production has developed a fluid sense of time and space, the problem may not arise at all. Another possibility is to have Hamlet return as if he were going to say something more to Ophelia (the "farewells" in the text of the nunnery scene are usually interpreted by moves towards an exit and back to her). He may even have dropped his book during the scene and returned to fetch it, perhaps using this as an excuse to speak to Ophelia again, only to find that by this time she has departed.

If we can solve these problems, the Q1 order makes for greater theatrical momentum and cogency. This argument was borne out, I think, by the four productions of the play I have been associated with, two of which used the Q1 and two of which used the Q2/F1 order.[7] But I offer this testimony with diffidence because so many variables enter into theatrical performance. I can say with a little more confidence that a series of workshop performances of the Q1 text done under my supervision almost invariably left me feeling that it plays much better than it reads.

It is at once conforting and distressing to note that my advocacy of the Q1 order echoes William Poel's. Comforting because I believe, with Tyrone Guthrie, that "he, if anybody, ought to be regarded as the founder of modern Shakespeaream production."[8] Distressing because his experiments with the order did not convince many people. Over a hundred years ago (in 1881 to be precise) he did a production of Q1 in support of his belief that, even though it was a first sketch, as was then commonly believed, it represented a more actable version than the later texts. As Rinda F. Lundstrom reports, all the reviews but one were unfavorable.[9] In 1900, Poel staged what was in principle the F1 text cut and rearranged according to the Q1 order. But he interpolated passages from Q1, and his "hodgepodge" of F1 lines, while it made sense, "played havoc with the scansion."[10] In the light of this, it is not surprising that the response was mixed.[11] Even so, Poel continued to believe that the Q1 order of scenes was the more playable.[12] The sad truth is that, although Poel's principles were usually sound, his execution often left much to be desired. In any case, the time was not yet ripe for some of his ideas. It was not until the middle of this century that his ideas of staging were generally accepted. Perhaps we are now catching up with his idea of editing this particular text.

The complete Oxford version of *Hamlet* is a move in the right direction. The text is basically F1; the additional passages in Q2 are relegated to an appendix. I suggest that we need also an edition which rearranges F1 and cuts it in accord with Q1, paying much more attention to meter than Poel did and respecting as much as possible the reader's familiarity with the standard text. I say "reader's" familiarity rather than audience's. A theatrical director can rearrange the scenes any way he wishes, and of course such rearrangement is not uncommon. Tony Richardson, for example, reversed the order of "To be or not to be" and "O what a rogue" for the 1969 production starring Nicol Williamson. It is more difficult for the reader to do that, and, since I persist in thinking that a good play-text has a life independent of production, we need an edition that will help us to realize the play as a play in our minds.

In conclusion, let me make the disquieting point that, if my argument is valid, most of the uncountable studies of the most thoroughly studied play in history are addressed to a text that does not represent its author's last thoughts.

NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works* ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. xxxv. Because this edition gives us the most accessible text of the F1 *Hamlet*, all my references are to it.

2. *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* ed. Philip Edwards. The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 32.

3. Albert B. Weiner in his edition of *Hamlet: The First Quarto* 1603 (Great Neck NJ: Barron's Educational Press, 1962) demonstrated convincingly that the text was based upon an abridgement but discredited the concept of Memorial Reconstruction (MR). Harold Jenkins in his New Arden edition of *Hamlet* (London: Methuen, 1982), p.22 ff. argued convincingly that Q1 represents a MR of an abridgement.

4. See Edwards' edition, p.10 ff.

5. Ibid., pp. 20-24

6. William Stephen Coleman, *Hamlet: An Acting Edition*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1973. My indebtedness to this edition, which formed the basis for the 1972 production of the University of Utah Shakespeare Players, is pervasive. Dr. Coleman and I are engaged in preparing an edition along the lines advocated in the present paper.

7. The first was a production of Minnesota Theatre of the Air broadcast in 1961, the second and third were productions of the University of Utah Shakespeare Players in 1968 and 1972, and the fourth a production of the New Shakespeare Players, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1977. The former two used the Q2/F1 order and the latter two the Q1 order.

8. Quoted in J. L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 47.

9. Rinda F. Lundström, *William Poel's Hamlets: The Director as Critic* (Ann Arbor MI: UMI Research Press, 1984) p. 28 ff.

10. Ibid., p. 78. See also p. 58 ff.

11. Ibid., p. 82 ff.

12. Not a few others have testified to the theatrical effectiveness of the Q1 order on the basis of production experience, e.g. Donald Wolfit, First Interval (1954), p. 154; George Altman, "Good Advice from the 'Bad' Hamlet Quarto, " *ETJ* 2 (1950), 315; and Gunnar Sjogren, "Producing the First Quarto Hamlet," *Hamlet Studies*, I (1979), 35-44.

Beauty and Honesty: A Note on a Bibliographical Spoonerism in *Hamlet* 3.1. 103-16

SHANTI PADHI

Whosoever supplied the garbled version of Shakespeare's text for Q1 of *Hamlet* (1603) had made, like Ophelia, almost a surrealistic "document in madness, thoughts, remembrance." And yet, parts of it (scholars maintain) appear to be Shakespeare's authentic work in a preliminary, imperfect state. The discrepancies between this version and the more acceptable texts of Q2 (1604-5) and F1 (1623) excite endless interest. To sort out the manifold errors, editors and interpreters of *Hamlet* have been kept busy for centuries.

Amidst this textual quagmire, a peculiar problem arises when the compositor (or scribe) reverses the order of words absent- mindedly and perpetrates spoonerisms, or creates a chiasmus and other variations in the pattern of speech which Shakespeare may not have intended.[1] Scholars who investigate mistakes arising from the erroneous transposition of words in Shakespeare's text sometimes add to the confusion when they misunderstand the meaning of the context.

We have an instance of this type of error in a note by Robert T. Levine on Ophelia's question, "Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty ?"[2] Levine proposes to transpose the positions of the words "beauty" and "honesty" so that Ophelia's question becomes, "Could honesty, my lord, have better commerce than with beauty?" This emendation not only destroys the meaning but is based on the flimsiest of bibliographical theories: that the typesetter (usually identified as Compositor Y) "forgot"[3] to reverse the positions of these two words after he had composed the preceding line spoken by Hamlet:

> Your beauty should admit no discourse to your honesty (Q1)
>
> You should admit no discourse to your beauty (Q2)
>
> Your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty (F1)

Levine's argument has already been rejected by Harold Jenkins (Arden ed.) as well as by George Walton Williams [4] who points out that in all three versions, Q1, Q2 and F1, the word "beauty" in Ophelia's reply occurs before "honesty": hence this order should be retained:

> My Lord, can beauty haue better priuiledge than with honesty ? (Q1)
>
> Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty ? (Q2)
>
> Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than your honesty ? (F1)

But since Williams (like Levine, Kitteredge,[5] and others) does not find the dialogue in this scene entirely intelligible, he lets off Levine lightly by not informing him that his spoonerism makes no sense at all when we dissect the meanings of each word.

"Have . . . commerce . . . with" means, literally, *have trade with, or have business exchanges, or have sexual dealings with. The Concise Oxford Dictionary* stresses the last meaning: "esp. sexual intercourse." For "honesty" to have commerce with "beauty" (Levine's emendation) would immediately suggest having dealings in the flesh trade. Surely she does not mean to say that honesty's best course is to pursue such transactions with sensuality. Even if we distort the meaning of "have discourse with" and interpret it as *keep company with*, or *have discourse with* (confusing the sense of Hamlet's "discourse to" which actually means *recourse to*), or *be co-existent with*, or *have consonance and consent with*, Levine's wording of Ophelia's line would still be incorrect because we cannot ignore the word "better" which implies a weighing of the two opposed qualities in question. Of the two, "honesty" is the "better" one. Beauty, being superficial, must seek the privilege of bettering itself - either by keeping better company with an honest person, or by being re-constituted as an adjunct of honesty where both qualities co-exist or can be harmonised in the same person. It is beauty that is better off with honesty, whereas honesty can definitely have better commerce or better associates with a host of other virtues, and not attach itself to the empty-headed sort, the beautiful and the "beautified." There is, for instance, a higher intelligence to commune with. Honesty might do well to consort with pious thoughts, simplicity, humility, or with the learned, or some greater divinity, the godhead. Beauty, in this context, cannot be equated with the supreme intelligence as Keats's Truth, or the Platonic ideal of goodness, but with a typical outwardly fair woman, compacted of frailties.

Ophelia herself does not use the word "beauty" to mean perfection, not even in the sense of physical perfection as Hamlet does when he speaks of "man . . . the beauty of the world" (2.2 327). Beauty in this play is only skin-deep. At times, it is not even that: Hamlet describes Ophelia as "beautified." The word is frequently bandied about in the court of Denmark. From the long lecture given by Laertes, Ophelia knows that her beauty is something that she must not "unmask to the moon" (1.3 37). The word here distinctly refers to her physical charms and virginity. Gertrude expresses the same meaning, more voluptuously, when she mentions Ophelia's "good beauties" (3.3 39) as the happy cause of Hamlet's wildness. Ophelia herself is not (as yet) a profound philosopher as she will be in her madness when she asks with unconscious irony (about the queen in her state of legalised adultery): "Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark ?"[6] In the conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia, the word conotes only outward appearances which, as Viola observes elsewhere, "oft close in pollution." Beauty, as far as Ophelia possesses it, is robbed of all spiritual content especially by Hamlet's harsh reactions (I have heard of your paintings"), after he has lost all sensitivity and intuitions about female psychology that Yeats might havetaught him.[7] By not exploring the semantics of each word, bibliographers will fail to appreciate the improved logic of the passage as it stands in Q2 and F1.

I do not see any disjointedness in these lines as presented in the conflated versions of Q2 and F1. Hamlet compounds the words "fair" and "honest" with hendiadys, using each in all its varying senses. "Fair" means not simply beautiful (as Ophelia supposes), but also just, and truthful. Similarly, he uses "honesty" to mean both chastity and sincerity/truthfulness/fairness. In *As You Like It* 1.2. 35-37, "honesty" refers exclusively to chastity; but Hamlet's hendiadys emphasises the inclusive range of his meanings. The gist of the dialogue is again misunderstood if we confuse "honesty" with "your honesty" (F1). Levine gets into a muddle when he states (in the second paragraph of his note) that "your honesty" is clearly a personification in Hamlet's speech, (like "your beauty"), which, as Levine paraphrases, does not refer to anyone's in particular but to Honesty (and Beauty) in general. However, in the next paragraph of his note, Levine changes his mind (while disagreeing with Dover Wilson)[8] and says Hamlet is explicitly "talking about *her* honesty, not his." To avoid such muddles in the comprehension of this passage, let me clarify that since Hamlet is speaking to Ophelia, "your honesty" alludes to Ophelia's chastity/truthfulness/sincerity. When "honesty" is not qualified by "your," it refers to honour and chastity personified, i.e., it includes her honesty, his honesty, and also Honesty and Chastity itself, or "his likeness" (line 114).

The following paraphrase, with some sub-textual extensions of meaning (which I insert within the speeches at times to condense interpretation) will perhaps clarify the coherence of the dialogue, and also explain the purport of Hamlet's "paradox" which Kittredge thinks is insane. In the concluding lines of Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, "Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remember'd," Hamlet's tone is genuinely apologetic, for Ophelia had been instructed by her father to "read on this book," an act expressive of "devotion's visage " Subtextually what Hamlet says to her amounts to an admission that he has sinned not only by penning an atrocious love letter, but also by frightening her in her closet. Speaking of his "sins," Hamlet hopes of course to be immediately forgiven. But Ophelia remembers only too painfully that he has not for "this many a day" made any attempt to restore relations with her after she had repelled his unmannerly intrusion with his clothes unbrac'd. She gently enquires, "Good my lord, / How does your honour for this many a day?" Touched by his humble answer, "I humbly thank you, well, well, well," Ophelia is naturally reluctant to return his gifts. But she must carry out her father's orders. So she offers to give back to him his remembrances, for she knows he has some undisclosed problem on his mind which has caused this change in his behaviour since the time he gave her the gifts. Now, "their perfume lost," the rich gifts wax poor.

Taken by surprise at this drastic step to cancel whatever affection had sprung up between them, Hamlet stiffens. In his disclaimer, "I never gave you aught," the emphasis should be on you. She was a different girl then. But Ophelia is determined to extort a confession of his former love for the benefit of the eavesdroppers. She pertly replies that he had once encouraged her: "My honour'd lord, you know right well you did." Disconcerted by these devious moves, Hamlet senses there is something afoot. He questions her motives. Olivier in the film searches Ophelia's face for signs of betrayal, burrowing into her eyes to discover if she is indeed sincere: "Ha, ha ! Are you honest ?" If she was honest and fair (ie, being fair to him as well as to herself), she should not have admitted him to her company. An honest woman allows no man access to her beauty. The Q1 version of Hamlet's line ("Your beauty should admit no discourse to your honesty") is clearly a mistake, a spoonerism of the brainsick actor or pirate-scribe with the parrot's tongue who supplied the text. It is wrong because the power to "admit" or make a judicious choice of company rests in one's honesty and not in one's beauty. Beauty is not a moral or intellectual faculty; it can neither admit nor debar company. It is only Ophelia's honesty that can prevent immoral discourse with her beauty.

Her reply is remarkable for its unexpected intelligence. Her rhetorical question challenges Hamlet's own honesty of intention: "Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty ?" Ophelia is quick to perceive that "discourse" need not be dishonest even if her own honesty errs by allowing others the opportunity to assail her beauty. She means, in effect, that she could not do better than converse with an honest man - like Hamlet. Hamlet's reply corroborates her argument. Even a good man cannot transform a whore as easily as a whore can corrupt an honest man. This is a paradox because normally we expect things to flow from a higher level to a lower; and goodness should be able to convert evil. But these days it's the converse. Though several critics have been perplexed by Hamlet's reply, the truth is that

To reverse the terms in Ophelia's speech would ruin the passage. Ophelia is not defending Beauty as the supreme quality in life from which honesty can derive intellectual enlightenment. There is no illogicality in Ophelia's utterance as presented in Q2 and F1. While proposing emendations based on bibliographical analysis, the textual editor must admit discourse to semantics and critical interpretation - what Fredson Bowers refers to as "the simple evidence of the sense."

NOTES

1 For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, a comparison of Q1 and Q2 shows transposition of certain words which should be considered as possible compositorial errors. The Queen Mab speech as printed in Q1, has three consecutive statements using the words "then dreams he". But Q2 alters one of these sentences to "then he dreams" (1.4. 81). This alteration makes no difference to the sense; but bibliographers might wish to deduce whether it is the author's preference or someone else's. At such points, the textual editor must decide (a) whether Shakespeare himself revised the lines, or was it the reporter/scribe, or a particular compositor with an observed tendency to make this kind of error ? (b) Whether such changes were carried out deliberately or unconsciously or erroneously; and (c) in each case, the variation may have been due to a desire to avoid monotony, or else the opposite regard for maintaining uniformity and regularity. Assuming there are no further questions, and that each admits of at least two possible answers, the number of inferences would be at least 222 which gives us at least 8 theories to choose from. Fortunately, the inversion in this instance does not affect the sense, and editors have not engaged in any controversy but have given us contradictory readings. Brian Gibbons (Arden ed., 1980), silently rejects the Q2 version of the line ("then he dreams") and prefers to regularise it to "then dreams he" for the sake of uniformity perhaps; whereas T.J.B Spencer (New Penguin ed., 1967) retained the Q2 order of words which was sensible not because he followed the old-fashioned principle of being faithful to his copy-text but because he obviously approved of a less mechanical turn of mind in both the speaker (Mercutio) and Shakespeare.

2. *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 27 (1980), 166-69

3. Levine also supposes (without evidence) that Compositor Y was "not well-educated enough" to understand Hamlet's discourses. It seems more probable that many compositors were university men, especially those given to 'sophisticating' the text.

4. *Shakespeare Survey*, 34 (1981), 195.

5. George Lyman Kittredge, ed. *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (Boston, 1939), p. 211, note for line 95, indicates there is an illogicality in the progress of this conversation, and that Hamlet's "Ay, truly" and "paradox" (lines 111-713) show him talking "as insanely as he knows." G.W. Williams (ibid.) also thinks there is a "lapsus" in the argument, and that Ophelia speaks without thinking too precisely or curiously on this subject. My note defends Ophelia's intelligence and purposeful reply, and explains Hamlet's paradox.

6. The punctuation adopted by modern editors is debatable, because F1 has a full stop after "Denmark," not a question-mark, as in Q2. In any case, Ophelia is not making polite enquiries

about Gertrude's whereabouts, but exclaiming, with wider criticism than she is aware of, at the absence of true majesty. To express the ambiguity, it seems better to retain the full-stop, or use an exclamation-mark. Accidentals (i.e., punctuation, italics, etc.) were nor usually marked by Elizabethan playwrights with any precision. Instructions contained in Moxon's manual on printing advise compositors to insert correct stops according to accepted rules. Authors in fact preferred to let the printer punctuate their script, only forbidding any alteration in the substantives (or words and sense of the passages).

7. Had Ophelia been less tongue-tied with her retorts and not so overborne and crushed by Hamlet ("I think nothing, my lord !") she might have answered like the Woman Young and Old' in Yeats's poem, *Before the World Was Made:*

> If I make the lashes dark
> And the eyes more bright
> And the lips more scarlet,
> Or ask if all be right
> From mirror after mirror,
> No Vanity's displayed:
> I'm looking for the face I had
> Before the world was made.

8. J. Dover Wilson, ed. *Hamlet*, 2nd ed. 1936, rpt. Cambridge 1971, p.193, interprets that Ophelia "misunderstands" Hamlet's words and "supposes him to mean that her beauty and his honesty ought not to discourse together" (p. 193). Levine misunderstands Wilson because he overlooks the meaning of the word "discourse" which implies discourse of other persons, especially Hamlet's. Even if we interpret "admit discourse to" as give access to or have recourse to, we must admit a third party into the presence of beauty and honesty. In effect, Wilson is right and Levine is not.

Hamlet and the Tragedy of Sexuality

JOHN O'MEARA

A consistently progressive view of the complex determination of factors that go to accounting for Hamlet's overwhelming engagement in visionary destiny has been greatly undermined in the criticism of this play by a prominent opinion which has stressed Hamlet's revulsion at his mother's sexuality as the *exclusive*, fundamental motivation in Hamlet's experience. Such an opinion rests strongly (though of course not entirely) on a reading of Hamlet's emotions about his mother's marriage in his first soliloquy, which has been taken to express Hamlet's fundamental melancholic disgust, emotions before whose intensity, indeed, the revelation of the murder and the sense of horror it inspires have been felt to be secondary and superfluous. As a matter of fact, what is more properly described as Hamlet's outraged despair over his mother's marriage constitutes at the point of Hamlet's first soliloquy an entirely *new* emphasis in Hamlet's grief, for until then Hamlet's melancholic outburst is one which we are bound to refer on the whole to Hamlet's grief over his father's loss, and to the sorry state of affairs to which the "world" has come since the death of his father. Hamlet begins his account of his feelings in his soliloquy with precisely this emphasis:

> That it should come to this !
> But two months dead ! Nay, not so much, not two.
> So excellent a king that was to this
> Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother,
> That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
> Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth !
> Must I remember ? Why, she would hang on him
> As if increase of appetite had grown
> By what it fed on: and yet, within a month -
> Let me not think on't. Frailty, thy name is woman ! -
> A little month, or ere those shoes were old
> With which she followed my poor father's body,
> Like Niobe, all tears - why she, even she -
> O God ! a beast that wants discourse of reason
> Would have mourned longer - married with my uncle,

My father's brother: but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules.
(1.2. 137-153)[1]

I see no evidence in Hamlet's soliloquy of an *active* disgust for his mother's sexuality, but rather profound outraged despair stemming from active pride in the sexual splendor of his father, which is specifically what has made her marriage to Claudius insupportable, the marriage being thus an unbelievable display of womanly weakness and insensitivity. Thus when it is revealed that what occupies Hamlet specifically is his mother's hastiness in marrying a second time, the revelation is one that is already deeply conditioned by our sense of the outrage it represents to the memory of Hamlet's father who projected in Hamlet's eyes a contrastingly noble condition. "Let me not think on't": think on what ? On Gertrude's marriage with Claudius. Yet the direction of the thought is *predetermined* by the earlier "Must I remember?", where it is clear that Hamlet is *also* thinking on the splendid union between Gertrude and Hamlet's father now so pitifully outraged.

Nor is Hamlet's identification of himself with his father in grief, subtle and profound as it is here in expression, *restricted* to these terms, for there is the *further* suggestion that the motive force in Hamlet's experience lies in his ultimate identification with his father in death and *God's* reality, including the implicit, *favourable* judgment assumed to have been bestowed on Hamlet's father, in contrast to the present ignoble life of his mother with Claudius:

O, that this too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew !
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter ! *O God ! God !*
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't ! Ah, Fie ! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this !
But two months dead ! Nay, not so much, not two. So excellent a king
That was to this Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth !
Must I remember ? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on; and yet, within a month -
....

> why she, even she -
> *O God!* ....
> ....married with my uncle,
> (1.2.129ff) (my italics)

And. so, when Horatio finally breaks the wondrous news of his father's visitation, the terms in which Hamlet expresses his impatience with Horatio to tell on are all in keeping with this fundamental motivating inspiration: "For God's love, let me hear" (1.2.195).

With the Ghost's account, however, comes a dramatic re-orientation in Hamlet's view. For from the moment the Ghost begins to reveal himself at the interview, it is established for a start that judgment on Hamlet's father has *not* been favorable as Hamlet has supposed, thus greatly complicating and intensifying the grieved pity Hamlet already feels over the loss of his father in death:

> Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
> Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd;
> Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
> Unhous'led, disappointed, unanel'd;
> No reck'ning made, but sent to my account
> With all my imperfections on my head.
> O, horrible ! O, horrible! most horrible !
> If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
> (1.5.74-83)

At the heart of the outrage to Hamlet's father is the suggestion of a horrible inhumanity represented by a murder whose significance for Hamlet's father finally is that he was "Cut off in the blossoms of his sin." It is a strange phrase - because of the violent juxtaposition we get of "sin" with all the positive qualities invoked for us by the term "blossoms." Yet a somewhat complex adjustment on our part will allow us to penetrate the paradoxical, and indeed quite terrible, significance of the phrase. In our post-Romantic age, we will be inclined to overlook that "nature" almost always automatically involved for the Elizabethans the *sexual* correlative; when we consider, furthermore, the overwhelming and contradicting influence of Calvin and of Luther at this time, we shall then be in a position to see in Shakespeare's use of the phrase the recognition of a power of judgment bearing *down* on the sexual optimism of the Elizabethans. What the phrase appears meant to convey, to the tragic confounding of Hamlet's aesthetic sense, would seem to be a judgment on the sinfulness of even the richest and noblest sexuality, what had formerly been assumed, that is, to be the expression of a noble beauty in nature fully embodied for Hamlet in the sexual splendor of his father as a man, but which metaphysical events have now revealed to be finally punishable in eternity.

The objection will perhaps be raised that the Ghost at this very interview speaks of his "love" as being "of that dignity/That it went hand in hand even with the vow/I made to her in marriage" which would seem to suggest a "love" that was sound. But, in fact, the Ghost is here referring to his faithfulness: faithfulness on his part does not imply soundness in the relationship: and we learn here that there was Gertrude's adultery with Claudius, and this already implies a relationship between Gertrude and the elder Hamlet no longer sound. But, in any case, for Calvin, as for Luther, neither faithfulness nor marriage could ever ensure soundness in the sexual relationship; or as Luther puts it: "nothing can cure libido, not even marriage"[2] - And the Ghost's sudden revelation captures indeed all that is most disturbing in the Protestant view, namely that such a significance for sexual love could not be known for certain except as a judgment in the other world. Such a reading of the Ghost's situation will explain what has long baffled critics, that is, as to why Hamlet should treat the sexual problem as if it were a universal affliction. For the effect of this revelation on Hamlet, we must assume, must make of his father's fate a universal embodiment of the tragedy of sexuality.

Indeed, the motivating force behind Gertrude's adultery and the murder it engenders is an inhumanity of the profoundest implication. It isn't merely that a bestial lust leads to (or is involved in) the inhumanity of murder: ultimately the significance of such lust is to emphasize the lust in all love, involving a murder that is itself a violent arraignment of sexual love, leading to punishment in eternity for Hamlet's father. In this arraignment we find represented that darker Lutheran view which is now brought into further tension with another view that is yet reserved, more indulgent and typically Elizabethan, according to which sexual love is innocent, and a normal indulgence of nature to be atoned for and settled (in preparation for eternity) through the customary religious rites:

> Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin
> Unhous'led, disappointed, unanel'd;
> No reck'ning made, but sent to my account
> With all my imperfections on my head.
> O, horrible ! O, horrible ! most horrible !

It is to the full implications of these most complex developments, in themselves extremely unwieldy, and not, as has been suggested, to some mysterious psychotic disturbance, that we are to ascribe Hamlet's later hysterical preoccupation with sexuality. It is how Hamlet's original sense of the moral-emotional outrage against his father is ultimately experienced.

Such hysteria is not to be confused with the 'hysteria' over his mother's sexuality displayed in the first soliloquy which has been much exaggerated and, I believe, in any case, misinterpreted. The 'hysteria' expressed there measures the gap between his mother's lust for Claudius and the innocent intensity of her sexual love for Hamlet's father. This distinction is not merely intensified, it is tragically confounded by later revelations about the sexual implications of his father's murder, and no doubt the outrage is the greater for this. To this is added the horror of punishment in eternity, all of which calls for full and immediate revenge. Thus, in his preoccupation with sexuality, Hamlet is not giving vent to a disturbance independent of the play's pattern of crime and punishment, with implications strictly for Hamlet's character or his view of life. On the contrary, he is coming to grips with the disturbance at the very heart of the play: with the horror of a sexual judgment which leads directly to punishment in Eternity for Hamlet's father.

And so we get that tortuously pained and tragic accusation, so complex, which Hamlet brings against Gertrude in the closet scene.

> Such an act
> That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
> Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose
> From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
> And sets a blister there; makes marriage-vows
> As false as dicers' oaths. O, such a deed
> As from the body of contraction plucks
> The very soul, and sweet religion makes
> A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face doth glow
> O'er this solidity and compound mass
> With heated visage, as against the doom -
> Is thought-sick at the act.
> (3.4. 40-51)

One of the more significant features of Hamlet's complex accusation here is that it begins with an account of blighted love which would seem from the context to apply to the relationship between Hamlet's mother and father but which might equally apply to the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia (it is not, as E.M.W. Tillyard claims,[4] merely a reference to the latter). The ambiguity is significant and a clue to Hamlet's behaviour towards Ophelia in the nunnery-scene. Hamlet's behaviour here is not to be explained as a mysterious, fundamental disturbance regarding sexuality, one essentially *unrelated* to the murder; on the contrary, it is precisely Hamlet's disposition in the scene to view the nature of this relationship strictly in relation to the absolute, sexual implications of the murder, particularly its implications for the innocence of love. Thus when Hamlet characterizes consummated love as something that would make of Ophelia a "breeder of sinners" (by this, of course, Hamlet has specifically in mind a consummated love with him), Hamlet is acting on the assumption that all love is lust, when seen from the perspective of eternal judgement, as true of Hamlet and Ophelia as it was of his father and mother. The effect of this perspective on Hamlet is to persuade him that although he is himself "indifferent honest" (3.7. 12) and likely in the figure of Ophelia to be "inoculated" by "virtue," he is inevitably bound to "relish of it."

Yet such an explanation as I have given could not *alone* account for Hamlet's peculiar hysteria, either in the nunnery-scene or the closet-scene, which seems finally to emerge from the murder's full paradoxical implications for love. These set in tragic conflict, alongside the absolute knowledge of love as lust, a lingering sense of the fundamental innocence of love. Thus Hamlet's behaviour in the nunnery-scene is ultimately explained by the knowledge that he could not from an eternal perspective have loved Ophelia with the innocence he supposed; yet, the knowledge itself is endowed with the full pain of a tragic discovery conflicting with the more immediate knowledge that he did and still does. And it is thus that we are given a sense of what has been lost, and must be abandoned: belief in a love which ennobles nature characterized in the play by the love between Hamlet and Ophelia and that between Hamlet's father and mother, what the play elaborates as the "rose" in love (3.4. 42-43) embodying "rose of May" (4.5. 154) - contrasted with "as flush as May" (3.3. 81) - that itself held the "expectancy and rose of the fair state" (3.1.152), but which tragic events have revealed to be merely the "primrose path" (1.3. 50) - compared with "the blossoms of my sin" (1.5. 76) - leading to "sulphurous and tormenting flames" (1.5. 3).

Hamlet's behaviour towards Ophelia is thus finally bred of (and fully explained by) Hamlet's new tragic sense of the original sexual paradox. In this tragic condition, it is evident that there can no longer be much significance for the kind of compromise honesty once treated as an absolute honesty, till the Ghost's revelation exposed it as compromise, which once settled the paradox by properly subordinating sexual nature to the rites of religion, specifically to marriage. It is with this consideration in mind, then, that we must approach Hamlet's new sense of the sexual paradox:

> for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty
> from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can
> translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime
> a paradox, but now the time gives it proof.
>
> (3.1. 111-115)

Here, in Hamlet's reference to "honesty," the more obscure sense of 'genuineness' or 'legitimacy' has been grafted onto the more obvious, immediate sense of 'chastity' through a statement viewing the conflict between sexuality and chastity implicitly in relation to the conflict between sexuality and marriage as brought out by the murder. By the latter conflict I mean primarily the limitations of marriage as a means of restraining and sanctifying the sexual drive, limitations exposed by the revelations about his fate made by Hamlet's father but also and more obviously, the sexual considerations which led Hamlet's mother to violate her marriage to Hamlet's father thus ultimately bringing about (whether the subsequent marriage to Claudius was a direct cause of the murder or not) Hamlet's full tragic discovery about marriage. Given this last connection, it seems inevitable that Hamlet should come to see Gertrude's marriage to Claudius as a living embodiment of all that marriage has been shown not to be; likewise inevitable that the question of an honest love with Ophelia, which could only be kept honest by marriage, should drive Hamlet to say with special reference to the implications of Gertrude's marriage: "I say we will have no more marriage" (3.1. 14).

The tragic situation underlying this climatic utterance is brought to full statement in the passage from the closet-scene (3.4.) already quoted. We may summarize that situation by tracing the argument implied. The suggestion is that the "union" (and marriage) between Gertrude and Claudius (and the murder it involves) has implied a blighted love, not only between Gertrude and the elder Hamlet but also between Hamlet and Ophelia. This is so in the sense that the union involves the *falsification* of marriage. Apart from the fact that it represents the violation of one marriage by another, the full effect of the union has been to destroy the illusion that marriage necessarily sanctifies love, for what has been exposed *sub species aeternitatis* are the limitations of marriage alone before the power of sexuality. What has been finally lost in fact is an innocent perspective on religion as a whole, what had formerly made it possible to indulge the sweetness of sexual love and at the same time (and without contradiction) submit to the judgements and practices of religion: that "sweet religion" which tragic events have revealed to be merely a "rhapsody of words."

In the rest of the speech, Hamlet goes on to claim through some typical Shakespearean hyperbole, that the sexual outrage has been, in fact, so monstrous and so appalling to Heaven, that what it threatens is the break-up of the world itself, and the immediate precipitation of doom and judgment. This is of course more than mere hyperbole. In being represented as "thought-sick," Heaven embodies Hamlet himself, the suggestion being that in his psychological experience of the outrage Hamlet has literally united himself with Heaven in the sense that he has come to possess as a result of his experience intimations of a visionary eruption in the world. The propelling force behind the anticipated eruption thus lies in Hamlet's profound experience of outrage. From the representation of Heaven's face this is emphasized as a prodigious sense of shame, but a sense of shame represented significantly as the lust which has compelled it, as "heated visage" suggests simultaneously the blush of modesty and sexual ardor. The ambiguity in the representation of Heaven's face would seem to be used by Shakespeare finally to build up the image of Heaven, on the verge of the Final judgement, blushing over itself as a Great Whore. Whatever we may think of this as an intimation of the projected scope of judgment in this play, it seems clear that Shakespeare meant by it to project some sense of the absolute implications of Hamlet's psychological experience, here specifically as it relates to his awareness of lust as a universal condition portending judgment for all in Eternity.

To Gertrude's further exasperated appeal challenging an account of the complex accusation Hamlet brings against her, "Ay me, what act, / That roars so loud and thunders in the index?" (3.4. 51-52), Hamlet replies, typically, not with any direct reply, but, as if as counteraction to Gertrude's contemptuous disbelief over his abstraction, by penetrating again to the very contrast between his father and Claudius, the wilful realization of which in himself began with the process initiated by the Ghost, leading to the ultimate crystallization of this revelation in the lines: "Look here upon this picture and on this." One may look upon Hamlet's return to the contrast between his father and Claudius at this point of the play merely as a regressive emphasis. To my understanding, however, it occasions in Hamlet rather some of the most intense thinking, penetrating into the power of a lust capable of defying all reason which, whatever the precise causality in time, *remains*, on the level of significant metaphysical reality, not only the animating cause in the murder of Hamlet's father but the appalling occasion of Hamlet's revelation about a supernatural judgment testifying even more conclusively to that power's horror. When one bears in mind this further supernatural extension of the tragedy it becomes clear that the terms of Hamlet's penetration of the matter at this point are entirely essential, if pitifully inadequate and baffled:

> What devil was't
> That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind ?

The outright hysteria that eventually emerges in Hamlet's baffled account only yields more point and penetration to Hamlet's further effort from here to reach out (as with a searchlight) to the basis of a controlling and corrective good lying amidst such a power of lust, which Hamlet desperately assumes must be there in the being *in reality*, to be touched off, if good is to prevail:

Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope. O shame ! where is thy blush ?

The power of the address to hell which follows comes, thus, from the literal object of Hamlet's thinking at this point:

Rebellious hell
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax
And melt in her own fire;

and at its climax gives ironic sign of the same desperate nihilism, the same utter lack of positive confidence about reality, if in a less advanced form, as will animate the later projections of Lear:

proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,

finally invoking the ultimate horrible transformation and inversion:

And reason panders will.

NOTES

1. All quotations from the Peter Alexander Text *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, (London: Collins, 1951).

2. Opp. exg. lat, I, 212,26-27, 29-30 1536 *Wim;* LXii, 8-10, cited by Hiram Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1950) p. 417.

3. See Nicholas Brooke *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (London: Methuen. 1968) p. 186.

4. See E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (Toronto: Toronto Univ. Press, 1950) p. 24.

Kyd Caps Revenge: *Hamlet* as Rite of Passage

LEE THORN

T.S. Eliot knew that *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd was an important source for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but he claimed not to know why, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare attempted to "tackle a problem which proved too much for him."[1] Eliot argued that the motive in *The Spanish Tragedy* "was a revenge motive simply; that the action or delay is caused . . . solely"[2] by practical difficulties. In stark contrast, he describes *Hamlet* as "a play dealing with the effect of a mother's guilt upon her son."[3] While Eliot's analysis of Kyd's play may be oversimplified and his characterization of Hamlet may be imprecise, he has hit upon both the essential difference between the plays and unknowingly suggested an explanation for it. The plays are not about the same thing. Hamlet could not be about a "revenge motive simply" because *The Spanish Tragedy* had significantly exhausted that motif for Shakespeare's audience.

John Kerrigan contrasts these two "greatest Elizabethan revenge plays [by saying that] Kyd presents a hero inexorably impelled by remembrance toward revenge [while] Shakespeare shows us a hero continually recoiling from revenge into 'remembrance of things past.' "[4] While sources for *Hamlet* can be traced back to 1200,[5] *The Spanish Tragedy*, by virtue of being a recent success (1587-89)[6] and by virtue of a certain perfection of form, has the primacy of having forced Shakespeare to take his play of 1600[7] in the opposite direction.

There are some dramatic extremes in Kyd's play that even Shakespeare could not have topped: the heroic quality of Hieronimo, the horrible nature of the crime that motivates him, the agonizing frustration of his restraints, and the totality of the revenge. Hieronimo is a high-ranking government official whose speeches and actions reflect an almost perfect nobility of spirit. Peter Sacks calls the murder of Horatio "a vicious rupture and perversion of a miniature pastoral world."[8] There is something almost exquisitely frustrating in being barred from seeking justice for a crime by the crime's perpetrator. And finally there is the revenge itself that scatters corpses until it engulfs "even the innocent Duke."[9]

Instead of trying to top all that, Shakespeare decided to attack a different theme, a theme so radically different that it left him free to adopt the same topic and many of the same conventions of *The Spanish Tragedy* - "the ghost, the avenger's death."[10] This strategy gives *Hamlet* both the comfort of familiarity and the thrill of novelty. The theme that Shakespeare adopted may not have had a name in his day; it is currently known as a "rite of passage." *The Spanish Tragedy's* dramatic concern (as opposed to its religious, moral and philosophical implications) is whether and how the obstacles of circumstance can be overcome. *Hamlet's* dramatic concern is whether and how the obstacles of character can be overcome. Can the college boy become a man by avenging his father ?

This type of rite of passage is today associated with adolescence. Eliot makes an interesting comment in this regard: "intense feeling . . . exceeding its object . . . often occurs in adolescence. . . . The Hamlet of Laforgue is an adolescent; the Hamlet of Shakespeare is not, he has not that explanation or excuse."[11] Eliot here maintains his consistently eccentric critical perspective by faulting a play because one of its characters fails to act his age, but even this criticism can be answered by the well-known fact that college often protracts adolescence.

Hamlet's emotional immaturity is initially established not by his grief over his father's death but by his sulky ostentation of that grief: "for ever with thy vailed lids/Seek for thy noble father in the dust" (1.2.70-1).[12] Claudius explicitly styles Hamlet's "obstinate condolement" an "unmanly grief" (1.2.93-4).

In his famous first soliloquy Hamlet confesses himself suicidal, afraid of suicide because of God's canon, "rank and gross in nature" (I.2.136), and hence disgusted with himself as well as with the world generally. In the same speech he implies a sexual prowess in his late father that he seems to indirectly deny in himself: "she would hang on him/As if increase of appetite had grown/ By what it fed on" (1.2.143-4) but she "married with my uncle;/My father's brother, but no more like my father/Than I to Hercules" (1.2.151-3).

Hamlet uses the word "man" as an honorific in describing his father: "He was a man, take him for all in all. / I shall not look upon his like again" (1.2.87-8). In contrast Laertes compares Hamlet's "favour" (and by extension Hamlet) with "A violet in the youth of primy nature" (1.3.5-7). And Hamlet's speech about inborn defects, "vicious mole[s] of nature", (I.4.24) is redolent with self-doubt.

Polonius proposes a talk with Mom: "Let his queen mother all alone entreat him/To show his grief" (3.1.190-1). Apparently the talk with Mom "all alone" was already the recognized tonic for troubled youngsters that it became again in the sitcoms of the 1950s. The talk results in Polonius' death when Hamlet stabs him through the arras. The stabbing at something unseen - be it rat, man or king - is a disturbingly cowardly act that also has a childish quality; it's almost like running into a fight with fists flailing and eyes tightly

Examples of Hamlet's dithering as he philosophizes about man, fate and God can be multiplied almost endlessly. The most spectacular indecision is perhaps his failure to kill the king when the king is alone with his back to Hamlet. Hamlet rationalizes his failure of nerve in this instance by saying that he doesn't want to help the king out with God by killing him in prayer (3.3). The ghost of his father must finally return to remind Hamlet of his "almost blunted purpose" (3.4.111). The line that runs all through the procrastination is much more cowardice than scruple. Late in the play Hamlet tells us exactly how much more: "some craven scruple/ Of thinking too precisely on th' event, - / A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom/ And ever three parts coward" (4.4.40-3).

Hamlet's failed relationship with Ophelia parallels the rite of passage theme. He is neither fighter nor lover. When she stops seeing him on her father's orders, Hamlet makes no attempt to win her back. Instead he cruelly finalizes the break with the scene of his "Get thee to a nunnery" speech (3.1.122-134). His sexual banter with Ophelia after the break is so "merry" that it sounds relieved (3.2.120-145). He makes his greatest protestations of love to her only when she is safely dead, and these protestations - "Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?/ Woo't drink up esill? eat a crocodile?" (5.2 .298-9) - have the I-can-do-anything-better-than-you ring of the playground.

In the final act when Hamlet gets back from abroad, we are given some hope that he has changed sufficiently to complete his rite of passage. He has been in "continual practice" (5.2.221) with his sword (attention Freudians !), but he still manifests a childish hide-and-seek mentality; "Couch we awhile, and mark" (5.1.245).

In the long awaited event, when Hamlet finally does kill the king, he does not do it to avenge his father. In the heat of the moment, the proximate cause of his killing the king is much more plausibly the knowledge that the king has killed him with poison, knowledge that he gains from the speech immediately preceding the fatal action he takes.

The tragedy of Hamlet is that he does not have what it takes (courage, guts, "the right stuff," enough testosterone, whatever) to complete his rite of passage and become a man. This is a sexist and/or macho reading of the play only to the extent that the play is not sexist and/or macho. The characters that we are given as models of masculinity, the stoic Horatio and the warlike King Hamlet, further suggest that it is. If Hamlet had acted expeditiously and decisively to kill the king, he may have forfeited his own life but the lives of Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes and Gertrude might well have been spared. In the play's last speech, Hamlet ends up a "would have been": "Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,/For he was likely, had he been put on, / To have prov'd most royal" (5.2.407-9). Don't bet your ghost's repose on it.

Why then does Hamlet come off for most of us as a sympathetic character? How can we accept Horatio's "Good night, sweet prince,/And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest !" (5.2.370-1) ? Of course he's witty, loyal, charming and he tries hard, but a more fundamental reason may be that we agree with him when he says that a fatal flaw in a man, a "vicious mole of nature" (1.4.24), is not his fault "Since nature cannot choose his origin" (1.4.26). Shakespeare's subtext is that Hamlet can't help being Hamlet, moles and all. That we still sympathize with him, given the world of the play and given our own only slightly less sexist-macho culture, constitutes a kind of emotional radicalism.

NOTES

1. T.S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), p.63.
2. *Ibid.* p.57.
3. *Ibid.* p.58.
4. John Kerrigan, "Hieronimo, Hamlet and Remembrance," *EIC*, II (April, 1981), 106.
5. Moron Arroyo Ciriaco, "The Spanish Sources of *Hamlet*," *HisJ*, I (1980), 6.
6. Kerrigan, p.106.
7. *Ibid.* p.107.
8. Peter Sacks, "Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge, and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare," ELH, IIi (Fall, 1982), 581.
9. *Ibid.* p.585.
10. Charles A. Hallett, "Andrea, Andrugio and King Hamlet: The Ghost as Spirit of Revenge," PQ, 56 (1977), 44.
11. Eliot, p.63.
12. All references are to *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark* ed. George Lyman Kittredge, Ginn and Company (Boston:1939).

"Foul and Most Unnatural Murder": *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*

SARVAR KHAMBATTA

The question whether revenge is Hamlet's duty or the fiend's snare to be avoided at all costs has been examined in considerable detail over the last few decades. Answers that have been arrived at, on the basis of the *Hamlet* text alone, have been tentative and uncertain. However, a simultaneous reading of *Macbeth*, bearing in mind the fact that it was written six years or so after *Hamlet*, throws some light on a question that seems to have become as much a critic's dilemma as it was Hamlet's.

It is possible to postulate that the whole action of *Macbeth* is an exploration and working out of a pattern already adumbrated, in essentials, in *Hamlet* and that the outcome of *Macbeth* illuminates certain knotty points in Hamlet's dilemma. The fact that Hamlet and Mecbeth are protagonists at the centre of two of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies has, hitherto, obscured the fairly obvious point that the two men have little else in common, and that attempts at pointing out parallels or contrasts between them serve little or no purpose. That is not to say, however, that the two plays have nothing in common; just that it is not Prince Hamlet who is the point of comparison with Macbeth, but the murderer-usurper Claudius.[1]

In both plays, it is the secret murder of a king from which radiates the chaos in the land and the tragedies of the protagonists. In *Hamlet*, which precedes *Macbeth* by some six years, this primary willed act takes place before and outside the time continuum of the actual play. Horatio draws conscious parallels with the palmy state of Rome:

> A little 'ere the mightiest Julius fell,
> The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
> Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets . . .
> . . . stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
> Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,
> Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
> Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.[2]

This is the first of recurrent references to the fate of Caesar on which Shakespeare had written a play only a year before *Hamlet*. The passage carries overtones of the cataclysm which accompanied the crucifixion and indicates a recurrent element in Shakespeare's work and in Elizabethan thought.

The Medieval-Elizabethan universe was a divinely ordered one, with God at the apex of all creation. The king was divinely appointed to govern the body politic as the human head governs the human body. This organically ordered, harmonious vision of the cosmos saw all created things in divinely appointed "degree, priority and place." Any disturbance in any part of this whole, would send out ripples of disorder, felt in greater or lesser degree, through all creation. In the case of the murder of a king, God's own anointed deputy on earth, these ripples would be nothing short of cataclysmic. Rebellion of any kind against a rightful sovereign was seen as a terrestrial re-enactment of the primordial revolt of Lucifer.

> There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
> That treason can but peep to what it would,
> Acts little of his will.
>
> (4.5.124-26).

Out of his own mouth Claudius condemns himself as he repeats the conception voiced earlier by Rosencrantz:

> The cess of majesty
> Dies not alone; but like a gulf doth draw
> What's near it with it.
>
> (3.3.15-17).

In *Macbeth*, these assumptions find their most cosmic expression in the conversation between Ross and the Old Man as they discuss the night of King Duncan's murder. That, in fact, is the only purpose of this otherwise superfluous scene. Regicide, in these two plays, is the single central willed action which dislocates "degree, priority and place." Denmark rots and putrefies, Scotland is overwhelmed by apocalyptic horror, because a king's murderer wears his crown.

The cosmic upheaval is not peculiar to *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* alone, it attends all "cess of majesty." What distinguishes these two plays from *Julius Caesar* is that while the latter deals with a public political *assassination*, before a huge crowd, in broad daylight, the other two plays deal with secret and personal *murders* of venerated kings. Caesar is presented as something of a megalomaniac and Brutus, in spite of his credulous gullibility is, even in his enemies' estimation, "the noblest Roman of them all" who bloodied his hands from altruism and disinterested patriotism. Nothing even remotely similar can be said of either Claudius or Macbeth.

For one thing, both victims are exemplary and venerated kings whom no incipient 'Brutus' would have had the slightest reason to assassinate. In addition, both murderers are the victims' kinsmen - one a brother, the other a cousin. And both murders are perpetrated with the obvious aim of usurpation, sidetracking the victims' sons who are the rightful heirs. The self-centred secrecy of the murders in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* is heavily underlined in images of darkness and disease: "the blanket of the dark" that prevents Heaven from peeping forth to cry "Hold ! Hold !"; the darkness and supernatural terror announcing the ghost's appearances in *Hamlet;* and repeated images of sores and ulcers. It must be noted that the elder Hamlet's murder actually takes place in the afternoon in broad daylight. It is, nevertheless, secret; and the victim, like King Duncan in *Macbeth*, is asleep when he is killed.

What is interesting when we consider the dramatist's treatment of the two murderers is the fact that the embryonic stirrings of conscience in Claudius are heightened to acute spiritual agony in Macbeth as he contemplates his act. Claudius, for all his dastardliness, for all his moral obtuseness, in spite of his lack of a poetic imagination is also conscious of the good. His conscience *is* caught. There is even a momentary clutching at repentance as there never is in *Macbeth*. The moral conscience of a murderer, which Shakespeare sketched only roughly in *Hamlet*, becomes a central preoccupation in the later play. And in neither is the murderer's conscience strong enough to make him renounce the fruits of his crime and repent. In fact, both of them set about planning further murders to safeguard themselves, with no conscientious qualms or scruples. Claudius is at his most hateful as he makes arrangements to have Hamlet shipped off to England to be executed. Macbeth, with the same precise, cold-blooded brutality, arranges the murders of Banquo and his son. Both Claudius and Macbeth have committed regicide themselves, with their own two hands. But they both get their later murders executed by hirelings - the fact that Hamlet escapes from the first trap is quite irrelevant.

The adultery-incest motif, which is as important in *Hamlet* as the murder-revenge cluster, is deliberately pruned away in the later play to focus attention on the murder and the murderer's inner life. This is achieved by the simple expedient of strengthening the Gertrude-figure into Lady Macbeth, making her almost as responsible for Duncan's murder as Macbeth is himself, though she has no hand in any of the subsequent murders.

Hamlet, the murdered King's son and heir, whom the Ghost casts in the role of the traditional avenger, is, in *Macbeth*, split up into the figures of Malcolm Prince of Cumberland, and Macduff the man not "of woman born," who have to unite to destroy the murderer and restore order. However, since the focus of this play is on the soul of the murderer, the legitimate representatives of order and degree are more important in the function they perform than as complex individuals like the Prince of Denmark. The focus has shifted from the consciousness of the legitimate heir to that of the killer-usurper.

Macbeth, therefore, may be seen as the detailed and mature working out of an action that was already central to *Hamlet* six years earlier. As such, it may be looked upon as Shakespeare's own answer to the vexed problem of the moral ambiguity of Hamlet's dilemma.

Many critics commenting on *Hamlet* have taken it for granted that the Ghost's command, "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder," is a moral duty incumbent upon Hamlet as his father's son. Others, like Eleanor Prosser and Nigel Alexander, have stressed the stern Christian prohibition against revenge - "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay" - and the way it is embodied in the circumstances and imagery surrounding the ghost in the guise of Hamlet Senior.[3] The former view attempts to explain Hamlet's procrastination as resulting from the weakness of his reflective tendency and resulting in his final tragedy. The latter explains the procrastination as resulting from conscious and unconscious moral scruples and religious conditioning actively endorsed by the dramatist.

In *Macbeth*, however, it is possible to see Shakespeare's own solution to the Danish prince's ethical dilemma. It is not private, secret revenge (which would drag him down to the murderer's own moral level) that is requred of Hamlet, but an open execution of justice upon the murderer of a King, which would heal Denmark and restore order, as Malcolm and Macduff restore order in Scotland. C.H. Sisson, basing his argument upon entirely different premises, arrives at a somewhat similar statement: "It is not merely that Hamlet was no avenger of a personal wrong, not merely even that he was the servant of that Providence in which he shows his full trust throughout. It is that he was God's justiciar in Denmark as the rightful successor in the eyes of Heaven to his murdered father. . . . He could therefore as true king perform the will of Heaven against a false king."[4]

Just after Claudius has rushed away from the performance of the play, Hamlet utters these ferocious words:

> 'Tis now the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on . . .
>
> (3.2.391-95).

A little later, as he comes up behind his praying uncle, he stifles his impulsive passion to kill, for the worst possible reason:

> Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent,
> When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage,
> Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed,
> . . . or about some act
> That has no relish of salvation in't,
> Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven,
> And that his soul may be as damned and black
> As hell whereto it goes; . . .
> (3.3.88-95).

This reaction has often been seen as a rationalisation of Hamlet's reluctance to kill. But the soliloquy serves no real purpose unless it is taken to mean exactly what it says, so that the words even undeline the sharp juxtaposition and contrast in the two men's physical positions - the one kneeling immersed in prayer, the other standing back, sword drawn. The words are virulently revengeful and bloodthirsty.[5] They indicate that the chaos and sickness which the murder of the elder Hamlet has unleashed in the state of Denmark, have not only sickened but also corrupted Hamlet's soul. He has been under a tremendous strain from the beginning of the play, and when he sees Claudius confirm his guilt at the performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*, the corruption comes uppermost. Only this can explain Hamlet's callous contempt towards the dead Polonius, untempered by any remorse;[6] or the sheer premeditated brutiality[8] that sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths, "not shriving time allowed," (5.2.46), and the almost aesthetic pleasure he derives from his own brilliance at having hoist "the engineer with his own petard."

Much has been made of the change in Hamlet's mood in Act 5; of the serenity, the peace, the mature acceptance that are revealed in the beautiful lines about a "special providence in the fall of a sparrow," the divinity that shapes our ends," and the final "readiness is all" which is almost a foretaste of Prospero. What is generally overlooked is that it is in the same scene, cheek by jowl with these utterances, that we have, in Hamlet's own words, his exultation at the way he has sent his two school-fellows to their deaths (as well as Horatio's muted but distinct disapproval). The horror of "They are not near my conscience" goes one better than even Claudius. Just a few seconds before "readiness is all," Hamlet says, "thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart - but it is no matter" (5.2.210-11). That is resignation, certainly, but despairing. There is no serenity in it.

If we keep this deterioration in mind, the final holocaust can be seen in terms of Providence executing justice because its elected human dispenser has allowed himself to be corrupted by vengefulness to the point of wanting to interpretation gains ironic point in Claudius's own soliloquy which follows Hamlet's exit from the prayer scene. It is heavily underlined later in Laertes's readiness to avenge his father's death by cutting Hamlet's throat in the church. Blasphemy, in fact, is used with telling effect, in this scene, to stress the infernal nature of the passion for revenge.

From this point of view, the Ghost may be seen, in Banquo's words, as an instrument "of darkness" like the Weird sisters who "tell us truths to win us to our harm." However, a discussion of whether the Ghost is a "spirit of health or goblin damn'd" is not relevant to Hamlet's own dilemma, although critics have always connected the two. Its narrative of the facts has been confirmed for Hamlet and Horatio by Claudius's own reaction to *The Murder of Gonzago*. It does not, therefore, become redundant. If it had not stated the facts and given a specific shape to Hamlet's vague uneasiness, Hamlet would not have been able to devise "*The Murder of Gonzago* to "catch the conscience of the King." It is not the Ghost's command of "revenge" that Hamlet must now execute, but impersonal justice, because he is the only lawful dispenser of that justice left - since "God's vicegerent" himself stands accused of murder and usurpation. Hamlet's moral stand, therefore, need bear no precise correlation to the heavenly or fiendish nature of the Ghost. He has to act, ultimately, on the strength of his own conscience and his role as Prince of Denmark, to heal himself, the court and his country.

In *Macbeth* the dramatist seems to offer this unambiguous indication of the direction in which Hamlet's answer lies. Malcolm and Macduff, acting as agents of justice and Providence, overwhelm the murderer-usurper and restore order in Scotland. In *Hamlet*, a holocaust consumes good and bad alike, because the only lawful dispenser of justice has, himself, succumbed to blood-lust. Unlike Malcolm, who has been able to get out of his tortured country to breathe freely and to plan his moves, Hamlet has had to remain at Elsinore and has been breathing in the corruption around him. Malcolm has the backing of his own people, of Siward and the saintly English King, Edward the Confessor, as he marches into Scotland and overthrows *Macbeth*. He has, therefore, at the end, an almost religious sanction for what he does, which Hamlet has forfeited through his deterioration. While *Macbeth* ends with Malcolm, the rightful Scottish king, on the throne, Hamlet hands over the Kingdom of Denmark to the Norwegian enemy, Fortinbras - "he has my dying voice" (5.2.355).[8]

NOTES

1. Commenting on the "religious tone" of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, A.C. Bradley says, "the horror in Macbeth's soul is more than once represented as desperation at the thought that he is eternally

Tragedy, Greewich, Conn." Fawcett Publications, n.d., p. 145).

2. *Hamlet*, ed. John Dover Wilson, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, I, i, 113-125. Further references to the play are to this edition and are incorporated in the text.

3. Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971.
Nigel Alexander, Poison, *Play and Duel: A Study in Hamlet*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
Robert Fleissner's article, "Subjectivity as an Occupational Hazard of 'Hamlet Ghost' Critics" (*Hamlet Studies*, 1, April 1979, pp. 23-33) gives a comprehensive idea of the variety of critical interpretations of the Ghost in *Hamlet*. However, only the two mentioned above are relevant at this point.

4. C.J. Sisson, *Shakespeare's Tragic Justice*, London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, p. 73. Sisson sees the Ghost as Providence's emissary conveying such instructions to Hamlet; "part of the Ghost's word is that he has permission from on high to carry out his mission to Hamlet" (p. 69). Karl Werder also insists that what was demanded of Hamlet was that he expose the crime and bring the criminal to public justive. He does not see the Ghost as "Providence's emissary" precisely, but assumes that it is an "honest Ghost," that the "revenge" it demands lies not in secret murder but in the exposure of the criminal and in the public justice which must be meted out to him (The Variorum *Hamlet*, Vol. II, pp. 354-358).

5. See Harold Jenkins, note on 3.3.89-95, the Arden edition of Hamlet, pp. 513-515.
It is only from this point on - Claudius being on his guard - that Hamlet gets neither the time nor the opportunity to confront the murderer.

6. Gertrude's remark to Claudius (4.1.24-27) appears to contradict what has just been said about Hamlet's callousness. The queen's words, however, are distinctly at variance with Hamlet's behaviour twenty-odd lines earlier.

7. It is true that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have not acquitted themselves honourably towards Hamlet, that they are the King's spies, that they know something of the King's intentions towards Hamlet. Whether they know that he means murder, is questionable. See Vernon Garth Miles in *Hamlet Studies*, 7, 1985, pp.34-35. However, even if one accepts Charles Haines's reading of 4.3.60 (*Hamlet Studies*, 5, 1983, pp.87-89.) and agrees that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were aware of the King's murderous intention, this does not mitigate the moral deterioration evident in Hamlet's intention. It makes his vidictiveness understandable, but not, therefore, morally justfiable. The point at issue is not whrther Rosencrantz and Guildenstern deserved or did not deserve death, but whether deliberate murder is reprehensible or not. We also have to remember that Horatio, to whom Hamlet finally entrusts the right reporting of his cause, comes close to voicing explicit condemnation of the act (5.2.56: "So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't"). Hamlet's immediate defensive reaction shows that he is aware of his friend's disapproval.

8. Jean Paris (*Hamlet*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1953), however, sees the matter in a different light: the original calamitous moment is not the murder of the elder Hamlet, "but that which Horatio reveals in I, i: King Hamlet himself had, earlier, put to death a rival, Fortinbras of Norway and annexed his lands" (p. 55). (Whether this is an accurate interpretation of I, i, 80-95 is, however, questionable). The Young Hamlet, therefore, cannot be the final restorer of order since he is a "usurper's" son. The ultimate reparation and restoration must, rightfully, be a reversion of the Danish throne to the Young Fortinbras of Norway. For the contrary view see Rudiger Imhof, *Hamlet Studies*, 8, 1986, pp.8-29.

"To consider too curiously": Hamlet's Moral Wonder

LYELL ASHER

> The supreme values in whose service man should live, especially when they were very hard on him and exacted a high price - these social values were erected over man to strengthen their voice, as if they were commands of God, as "reality," as the "true" world. . . . Now that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems "meaningless" - but that is only a transitional stage.
>
> - Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*

Think of *Hamlet* as a play that exposes what Nietzsche calls the shabby origins of these supreme social values, that de-classifies the mundane beginnings of a divine order whose distinctive power was its power to distinguish absolutely, its power to divide the world along natural perforations. The commands of the *Genesis* God had, after all, not simply created things, but put them in their place according to their kinds: things that creep on the ground, things that fly in the air, things that swim in the sea. There is something vaguely unholy then in the innocent fun of Polonius's "tragical-comical-historial-pastoral," for even Jewish dietary law, or at least much of it, is really a law of genre: the forbidden crustacean, for example, is so because he crawls in a place meant for swimming.[1]

If, in the West, knowing what something *is* depends largely on knowing *where* it is, in what category it belongs, consider for a moment how undependable a world this play offers us - how often something or someone is, or is thought to be, out of its natural place. The play opens nervously with the awkward replacement of a sentinel, with questions about who exactly is where, and whether the rivals of Bernardo's watch will arrive. Himself rivaled and replaced, the King's ghost is now up and about "usurping" the night, and Horatio calls him "extravagant" (1.1.154), which in the 16th century carried its literal meaning of "extra-vagare," that is, a wandering beyond proper boundaries. The Ghost tells Hamlet that his unnatural wandering is itself provoked by an unnatural brother, "that incestuous . . . adulterate beast" who occupies a bed that is properly his and the dislocations continue: "unmanly grief" misplaced in a court on the upswing; funeral baked meats on the marriage tables; Polonius stabbed in place of the King; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern suddenly and unaccountably in Denmark, and later executed in place of Hamlet; Claudius at confession instead of the incestuous pleasure of his bed where Hamlet wants to kill him (so that, incidentally, he will end up in the right place); the gravedigger lying in a grave not his own, the same grave that will a few lines later be occupied so irreverently by other intruders, Hamlet and Laertes; and, finally, Laertes and Gertrude succumbing to Claudius' poison in place of Hamlet. This and much more, we should remember, is taking place in a kingdom that is under the constant threat of another momentous boundary crossing - the invasion of the Norwegian army under Fortinbras.

In a recent essay entitled "Hamlet's Dull Revenge," René Girard has argued that it is at least one instance of this kind of confusion, an "overwhelming indifference" that Hamlet perceives between Claudius and his father, which accounts for the play's most interesting crux: Hamlet's failure to avenge his father's murder.[2] Whether or not one agrees with Girard's suggestion that the moral contrast between Claudius and his brother is actually very slight, and that the play mounts a Judeo-Christian argument against a revenge tradition which survives on the basis of such dubious distinctions, the play does seem obsessed with the ideas of doubling, relocating, invading - of things moving into places where they should not be. Hamlet's incessant punning is doubtless a species of this obsession, forcing as it does two meanings to reside and resound in the same verbal space. But in more obvious ways, too, Hamlet's figures, so often taking part in a metaphorics of infiltration and substitution, offer a constant diagnosis of Denmark's "extravagance" in its most physically intimate form - infection. To cite just a few of the more conspicuous examples:

> Why it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent
> congregation of vapors (2.2.298-9).[3]
>
> 'Tis now the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to this world (3.2.373-5).
>
> Mother, for love of grace
> Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
> That not your trespass but my madness speaks.
> It will but skin and film the ulcerous place
> While rank corruption, mining all within
> Infects unseen (3.4.145-50).

> And is it not to be damned
> To let this canker of our nature come
> In further evil (5.2.68-70).

And we should not forget that it was a murder by infection, by

> That leperous distilment, whose effect
> Holds such an enmity with blood of man
> That quick as quicksilver it courses through
> The natural gates and alleys of the body,
> And with a sudden vigor it doth posset
> And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
> The thin and wholesome blood (1.5.65-70).

Particularly striking about this last passage is the detail I have left out - namely the port of entry, the ears, as if no place should be respected according to function, not even the proper orifice for poison, the mouth.

An infected world in which things are constantly overstepping their proper boundaries has for its antidote something akin to stasis, staying put, keeping oneself pure, quarantined. Hence Hamlet's advising Gertrude to remain closed to Claudio, unadulterated we might say, Ophelia to remain walled up in a nunnery and to "Let the doors be shut upon [Polonius], that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house," and even himself to keep his own pledge of vengeance "all alone . . . unmixed with baser matter." Professor Girard is right in saying that the similarities between Claudius and his slain brother may make them difficult to distinguish, even for Hamlet. But this, I would argue, is just another symptom of what the figurative language of the play suggests is Denmark's infectious disease.

But given Hamlet's perceptive diagnosis, how do we characterize his reluctance to cure, his reluctance to avenge his father's murder, if not by saying with Professor Girard that the play echoes the command of the gospel to "give up retaliation and revenge in any form" ? Let me digress for a moment to consider the historical context of a remark Horatio makes in the graveyard scene. We will recall that there he accuses Hamlet's of having considered "too curiously" the fate of Alexander's dust. Though for men and women of the 20th century curiosity is, as G.M. Trevelyan put it, "the life blood of real civilization," earlier civilizations have more often than not been deeply suspicious of a wandering mind, and the Renaissance was not yet modern enough to constitute a real exception. Indeed, in many ways theoretical curiosity comes under increasingly sharp attack in the 15th and 16th centuries, if only because if had begun to show such menacing strength. It has have ascended Mt. Ventoux for no other reason than to see the view from the top; but we should not forget that the page he turns to in Augustine's *Confessions* warns against such a motivation: "And men go to admire the high mountains, the vast floods of the sea, the huge streams to the rivers, the circumference of the ocean, and the revolutions of the stars - and desert themselves."[4] Indeed, suspecting secular motives behind religious quests had become so common by the 14th century that by Chaucer's time pilgrimages were commonly criticized as undertakings prompted by nothing more than hollow curiosity.[5]

By Shakespeare's time curiosity was less often associated with actual pilgrimages than with inward journeys of the imagination. So a contemporary of Shakespeare's, Fulke Greville, writes in his *A Treatie of Human Learning* that contemplation

> Transforms all beings into Atomi;
> Dissolves, builds not; nor rests, nor gets by motion,
> Heads being lesse than wombes of vanity:
> Which Visions make all humane Arts thus tedious
> Intricate, vaine, endless, as they prove to us (LXX.1-5).[6]

The atoms of Democritus had been making a come-back since the mid-16th century, but their new respect was a matter of philosophical rather than scientific understanding. This meant that the cozy confines supplied by the mirrorplay of microcosm to macrocosm had been sprung, but in the absence of the mathematical principles which, by the mid-17th century, would supply new kinds of stability - i.e., system for hierarchy, relative for absolute place and movement, universal rules for inherent tendencies. Since the vertical categories of "higher" and "lower" could not articulate what would later become a horizontal *episteme*, the descent into atoms seemed indistinguishable from a descent into chaos. Not that atomism was untenable - the world *could* be reduced to the bare minima; but without the sense of order which only later would vindicate a mechanical conception of the universe by organizing, if not delimiting, an infinite reduction, *praxis* rather than *theoria*, use rather than apprehension became the only reliable means of knowing the world. The reality of the created world only came into focus at the distance of its usefulness; hence Greville's well-known habit of identifying contemplative wonder with paralyzing curiosity.

I am suggesting that Hamlet is contemplative in just this way, and thus a figure the early 17th century would have recognized with at least some suspicion. For the imagination that can follow the course of the funeral baked meats to the marriage tables, the course of Alexander's atoms to the plug in a beer barrel, can also follow the imposing political demands of the present to their ultimate insignificance in the distant future.[7] The perception that makes him mad, then, is the same perception which makes acting on this madness seem a fruitless enterprise, one whose results will dissolve in the infinity of time as if they had never been, like the clay that used to be Caesar which now, for the time being, and only for the time being, "might stop a hole to keep the wind away" (5.1.201).

And here again, in Hamlet's too curious considerations, a familiar family of metaphors: clay stopping up a hole in a wall, a reconstituted Alexander plugging up a beer barrel - convenient configurations of atoms briefly circumscribing what is in fact, for Hamlet, an infinite space blown by irresistible winds. Paul Cantor has recently argued that Hamlet is simply too "cosmopolitan" in the strict sense of the term - that is, as Cantor writes, "Hamlet is a man who wishes to take the *cosmos* as his *polis*," and would have made a lousy King for an apparent indifference to "the most basic of political considerations, the distinction between *us* and *them*."[8] Though this distinction like all others may indeed appear trivial and short-lived from the vantage point of eternity - or what amounts to the same thing, in the light of René Girard's infinitely illuminative Judeo-Christian revelation - for those of us suspicious of ontotheological vistas which afford such clarity of vision, there are no greater distinctions available than those dividing one polis from another, no greater ties than the ties that bind a community.

Wittgenstein called this more limited vantage point a language game, a form of life, and I want to invoke it here as a healthy acceptance of limits, what might be called a therapeutic of circumscription: an understanding of oneself and one's culture as being finite, contingent, and historical, but no less significant for that. Simply stated, it tries to get out from under the West's seductive dream of absolute knowledge and what Sartre called the "spirit of seriousness" the idea that values, if they are to have any force at all, must have an existence outside of time and human history.

I am suggesting that smaller stages will have to do. Though it may be true that from the standpoint of Judeo-Christian revelation there is no more difference between Claudio and his murdered brother than there is between the atoms of Caesar and the atoms of a clay patch, we should no longer pay court to such ultimates, no longer abstract ourselves so far from situations that all things, no matter how divergent, appear equivalent. Taking *Hamlet* seriously as a play means, I think, taking play seriously as a form of life, and that means not making the absolute and the eternal the conditions for meaningful existence. Revenge and retaliation may or may not be warranted, depending on the situation, but what Hamlet learns by the end of the play, if he learns anything at all, is that there are no invariable criteria to appeal to outside of a given political context, that the universe has no opinion on the matter one way or the other.

What, then, finally gives Hamlet a motive for acting ? Only his acceptance of temporary arrangements, where his atom-tracing has limits imposed on it, where he is bound in the nutshell of Denmark, in a context so overwhelming and immediate that his mind has neither the time nor the space to wander, or wonder. In my view, the mousetrap is one such nutshell, staged to catch Hamlet's conscience as much as the King's, and we should remember that it is soon after this play within a play that Hamlet does take action, pathetically awkward though it is, by slaying inadvertently a surrogate King.[9]

And the last scene, the scene in which Hamlet's promise is finally and tragically fulfilled - this scene too is a kind of game, a tournament, a put on. A Lord asks Hamlet "if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes" (5.2.88-9), and this game, like others, proposes a set of rules, such as boundary lines and time limits, to circumscribe fields of action and vision. It is just this sort of quarantine on his imagination, this acceptance of limitation and boundary, that Hamlet requires if he is to do anything at all. In what is doubtless an unintentional but no less insightful pun about the pretense of authority and the authority of pretense, Fortinbras says as much in his final words: ". . . he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal" (5.2.385-7).

NOTES

1. On the concept of unholiness as a violation of categories see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) Chapter 3.

2. René Girard, "Hamlet's dull Revenge," *Literary Theory / Renaissance Texts*, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 280-302.

3. My text for *Hamlet* is from the revised Pelican edition of *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), ed. by Alfred Harbage.

4. As quoted in "Petrarca: Ascent of Mont Ventoux," trans. Paul Oskar Kristeller in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p.44.

5. See Christian K. Zacher's *Curiosity and Pilgrimage* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), esp. pp. 3-17. For a far-reaching account of curiosity's history in the West, see Hans Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), especially part III.

6. *Greville's Poems and Dramas*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1945), Vol. I.

7. Cf. Paul Cantor, "Hamlet: The Cosmopolitan Prince," (*Interpretation*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Jan. 1984, pp. 15-27). Though I discovered his essay after my own had taken shape, Cantor reaches the same conclusion through slightly different means: "As opposed to the civic religions of the ancient world, Christianity is transpolitical. Aspiring to be a catholic church, Christianity refuses to be

limited by the boundaries of any particular regime. Hamlet shares this transpolitical perspective. He can never become fully absorbed in political life because he tends to view all the things of this world from the perspective of eternity. In that light all worldly goods seem transitory and ultimately insignificant. For Hamlet, to be a great lord is only to be 'spacious in the possession of dirt'" (p. 19). This strikes me as a pointed rejoinder to Wolfgang Clemens, whose fine essay, "The Imagery of *Hamlet*" (in *Shakespeare: Hamlet*, ed. by John Jump, pp. 64-77), first argues quite rightly I think that Hamlet "is rather a man gifted with greater powers of observation than others," and then concludes, as if by necessity, that meticulous observation leads to a clearer view of reality: "He is capable of scanning reality with a keener eye and of penetrating the veil of semblance even to the very core of things. 'I know not seems'" (p. 66). Perhaps the great irony of that last line lies in the fact that soon after Hamlet utters it, his "keener eye" will prove too keen, will discover that to be is, in the end, only to have seemed.

8. Cantor, p. 17.

9. Cf. Girard, p. 286: "What Hamlet needs, in order to stir up his vengeful spirit, is a revenge theater more convicing than his own, something less half-hearted than the play Shakespeare is actually writing. Fortunately for the hero and for the spectators who are eagerly awaiting their final bloodbath, Hamlet has many opportunities to watch rousing spectacles during his play and he tries to generate even more, in a conscientious effort to put himself in the right mood for the murder of Claudius."

PRODUCTIONS

Hamlet on the South African Stage

I will begin by briefly describing the structure of South African society. All South Africans are divided by law into four racial classifications: white, black, Coloured, or Indian. The 5 million whites comprise 3 million Afrikaners, descendents of the Dutch settlers, who control the government and the military, and 2 million English, descendents of the British. There are 3 million Coloureds, or mixed race people, 1 million Indians, and the majority 24 million blacks. Each group has its own separate residential areas, schools, hospitals, and Shakespeare productions.

Since its first production in Port Elizabeth in 1799, *Hamlet* has enjoyed continued popularity on the South African stage. As with Shakespeare generally, most productions have been staged by English-speaking whites. Their socio-political purpose is to perpetuate English culture in the struggle for cultural domination in South Africa. English-speaking whites tend to look down on the Afrikaners, the Coloureds, the Indians, and the blacks as being culturally inferior, and a solid performance of a Shakespeare play, looking almost as if it could have appeared on the London stage, does wonders for maintaining and consolidating their position of cultural superiority.

The first Shakespeare production in Afrikaans was in 1947, a production of *Hamlet* at His Majesty's Theatre in Johannesburg. Everyone involved was most enthusiastic. As Anna Neethling-Pohl, the co-director, put it, "They were one and all together heart-and-soul. I don't know what it was, but we were all aware that something big was on the go. We saw later what it was, but at that time we knew only one thing: that an Afrikaans-speaking company was going to present an Afrikaans translation of a Shakespeare play at His Majesty's and that it must be the best of which we were capable, individually and collectively" (Anna Neethling-Pohl, *Dankbaar die Uwe*. Cape Town and Pretoria: Human and Rousseau, 1974. p. 152).

Kobus Esterhuysen designed the early seventeenth-century costumes and the set which consisted of three short flights of steps linking different acting areas. By dropping a small curtain or changing the lighting, a new location could be created. Andre Huguenet, who played Hamlet, described it as "a stylistic decor with a Gothic leit-motif" (Andre Huguenet, *Applous*. Pretoria: J.H. de Bussy, 1950. p. 226).

Andre Huguenet's interpretation of Hamlet's character was interesting, Anna Neethling-Pohl told me. "He said to me one day when we started working, You know if my mother and father were in the Orange Free State and I were studying at Stellenbosch University {the prestigious Affikaans university near Cape Town} and there's a drought and it's dreadful and I can't go home for holidays but suddenly when I do go home after so many months, I find my father's dead and my mother's married my ever-smiling uncle. This is a terrible thing. What about my farm ? That's my earth. That's my piece of geography. He's made himself master of my bit of Free State earth, and I'd fight for it to the death. He saw the whole thing as this Dane who wanted his piece of geography, his kingdom." I asked her if Hamlet's madness was therefore feigned and simply a ploy in his plan of revenge. She agreed that this was partly so. "He was a ruthless man wanting his land back." she said. "He was also paying back and getting equal with the man who had murdered his father."

In her autobiography, Ms. Pohl notes, "He thought that the man who wanted to protect his property and validate his right of possession would be acceptable to the Afrikaner. He was right, because that first Afrikaans-speaking Hamlet was received with enthusiasm" (p. 153).

All in all, the production was a great success. People travelled from all over the country to see the first Shakespeare play in Afrikaans. The six week run in Johannesburg and subsequent ten days in Pretoria were sold out.

Shortly after the production closed, the Minister of Education, Jan Hofmeyr, invited Andre Huguenet and Anna Neethling-Pohl to join a committee to form the National Theatre Organisation, the start of state-subsidized theater in South Africa. "It was born out of *Hamlet*," said Ms. Pohl. She concludes her account of the production by saying, "We did not try to improve Shakespeare, we did not try to be 'different' or 'original,' we simply tried to let a living Shakespeare speak, even in a foreign language."

Speak he certainly did. This 1947 production of *Hamlet* may be seen as part of the resurgence of Afrikaner nationalism. Ever since the Voortrekkers left the Cape in the 1830's to escape from British domination, the Afrikaners have felt a passionate commitment to "their land." In battle after bloody battle, they wrested land from various black tribes to form the two Boer republics, the Orange Free State and Transvaal, only to apparently lose "their land" to the British after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. After Union in 1910, South Africa was governed largely by an alliance of moderate Afrikaners and English-speaking whites. In the 1940's the almost exclusively Afrikaner National Party under Dr. Malan gained prominence, and in 1948 ousted Jan Smuts' more moderate United Party in the general election.

For years the more "cultured" English-speaking whites, who had the glorious panoply of British culture as their heritage, had looked down upon the Afrikaners as crude and boorish, speaking a kind of bastardized Dutch, with no real "culture" to speak of. The 1947 production was therefore emormously important in validating Afrikaner culture by conferring on it the great prestige of Shakespeare. It also seems entirely appropriate that the production should focus on the question of land. Andre Huguenet's little farm in the Orange Free State was a symbol for everything they were fighting for; he was the wronged man who wanted back his land, the piece of land worth dying for. Something big was indeed on the go for Afrikaner power. The struggle for control of South Africa against the English was almost won. The struggle against the blacks would now be intensified.

Sheakespeare productions in South Africa, whether presented by English-speaking whites, Afrikaners, Indians, Coloureds, or blacks, tend to be showcases for the cultural sophistication of each particular group. English-speaking white productions proclaim the superiority of English culture; Afrikaans productions attempt to validate Afrikaner culture; Coloured, Indian, and black productions attempt to prove that their groups, too, are "cultured" and "civilized," and therefore deserving of better treatment. Some productions, however, deliberately try to subvert or interrogate the apartheid ideology by allowing the play to resonate in the South African context.

In 1969, the long tradition of anti-government demonstrations at the English-medium universities led to prolonged protests against apartheid and the continuing restrictions on civil liberties, partly inspired by the 1968 student riots in France, the anti-Vietnam War protests in the United States, and the worldwide youth revolution in general. Robert Mohr, head of the Drama Department at the University of Cape Town, directed a production of *Hamlet* at the Little Theatre with David Haynes in the title role.

Asked whether it was true that this *Hamlet* was being approached not from "the conventional literary angle," but rather that "the emphasis falls on the police-state authoritarianism in Denmark," Mohr replied, "It's not quite true. I have taken no specific line with the play; I've simply tried to read with my cast the play as it was written and to find out what in the play particularly interested them. Every new generation finds emphasis of interest in a great classic and Hamlet obviously is what he has always been but I find that the students themselves were very much more aware of the young people situated in a corrupt world that they've inherited, the generation gap, etc. The increased political and social awareness of young people today has brought about this emphasis in the production by perfectly natural means. We're not distorting the script at all, we're not looking for things that are not there, not superimposing things, I hope. It is merely a shift of emphasis that happens with a different point of view that a new generation brings to bear on the play. What seems to be coming out quite strongly is this very - I think contemporary thing - that students, such as the people who are playing these parts, are concerned about the world around them more than the previous generation were, that the generation gap, the young people like Hamlet, Ophelia, Laertes, young Fortinbras, the terrible twins, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are baffled and confused by the politically and morally corrupt state which is Denmark, and they are in revolt against it, each in their own way, or some of them go along with it for personal reasons, each as his character dictates, and this seems to be receiving the emphasis. To me, it is fascinating and it's a voyage of rediscovery of the play rather than superimposing a new interpretation of it" *(New Trend).*

In a 1985 interview, I asked David Haynes about the "political" interpretation of the play. He said, "I don't think Robert particularly pushed us in that direction. Your must remember 1969 and relate it to what was happening in France and Germany. In Cape town, there was a tremendous feeling amongst the student body, with very articulate radical leaders, and a student sit-in [to protest apartheid]. All these things were happening around that time and obviously, as a director, Robert was listening to what the response to the text was from the students. He tended to be somewhat unobtrusive in the early stages in directing. He would plant a seed and say, 'Perhaps Claudius is surrounded by guards and that's part of the problem why Hamlet can't act.' There was a great deal of discussion that went on amongst the students and I suppose that part of that emotional charge was certainly in my own head. As an actor coming up against Hamlet, I was responding to the political events that were happening around me. The demonstration by the students on the steps of St. George's Cathedral, for example: I remember the police throwing teargas, cannisters coming across. At one stage there was a baton charge and some of the students were chased into the precincts of the cathedral. It was a time of tremendous political tension and one couldn't completely divorce oneself from what was happening on the streets, and in parliament, and in the country at large. Of course, it was also a time of great international student rebellion. The older generaton had cocked things up. We had a feeling of reaffirmation - a sense of who are we and where are we, the younger generation, going to find our own ways."

I asked David Haynes about his interpretation of Hamlet's character. He replied, "It was a kind of moral debate. Your were aware of a kind of corruption that was there and you were part of that corruption. The heart of the play was in this political turmoil. The thing that really hurt the most was the betrayal by people like Ophelia, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and by Gertrude. The climax of the play was in that emotional turmoil." In the nunnery scene, for example, Hamlet sees Claudius and Polonius hiding and knows that he is being set up. Haynes said, "That was the connection: the personal betrayal of Hamlet as an individual in the interests of the state. How we are affected by the political circumstances that we happen to find ourselves in at the time. I don't know that there was any resolution. I think it asked more question that it answered.

The set was simple and functional. Owen Williams called it "a very model of the starkest simplicity, traversed by a sort of winding platform." For Jos Gerson, "The all round, dark gangrenous green walls suggested decadence. . . . In front of the ramp hung a long vertical red column of cloth, behind which Polonius and Claudius could hide. Somehow like the monolith in Kubrick's *2001*, it seemed to represent something divine, some moral power" (*New Trend*, May 20, 1969).

Critical reaction to the production was largely enthusiastic. Jos Gerson noted the contemporary relevance: "From the start: the frantic rhythm of the drums: the lecherous brothel-like cries in the background; the lords and ladies straight out of *West Side Story;* the luscious sex-bomb Queen Gertrude; Playboy King Claudius in his 'snazzy' closefitting admiral uniform; guards in leather boots and lumber jackets; Ophelia, no longer the virginal innocence of Victorian Romanticism, but a free-and-easy 'with-it' chic, an instance of the modern so-called problem child; Polonius, the type of bourgeois parent with which we have to contend. The implication is obvious." He added, "Robert Mohr's experiment is an unqualified success. The outcome, if not flawless, is certainly a fresh, exciting and meaningful approach to Shakespeare" *(New Trend)*.

Not all critics agreed. W.E.G. Louw conceded that the production was never boring. Otherwise, he wrote, "Two-and-a-half hours of undiluted hippie-dom is something I would not, under normal circumstances, be prepared to endure." He added, "An aspect that I could well understand but could less well appreciate. was a *Hamlet* seen as a protest of young people against political and moral corruption. Those who themselves look so decayed, as by far the majority of tattered 'young people' do, must be careful about who they are revolting against. Playing at revolution through sit-in strikes, a revolution-about-the-revolution as has become fashionable among students all over the world these days, smells today very much like Peking duck" (*Burger*, May 12 1969). Whether he meant "Peking duck" to mean simply "nonsense" in the sense of youthful folly, or whether he saw the worldwide youth revolution as part of a co-ordinated Communist strategy, as the South African government has long maintained, must remain open to conjecture.

I have come across no black or Indian production of *Hamlet* in South Africa. In 1981, the Eoan Group, a Coloured cultural organization, produced *Hamlet* in Cape Town. The production was in modern dress to emphasize the contemporary relevance of the play.

By the late, 1970s, the government had lifted its ban on intregration in theaters, so multiracial casts and audiences were once again permitted by law. Since then, the role of interrogating the apartheid ideology and its totalitarian ramifications has been largely appropriated by productions with multiracial casts. For audiences unused to such a phenomenon, the physical reality of black and white actors interacting on the stage provides a devastatingly concrete critique of South African society.

In 1981, Phyllis Klotz directed a theater-in-education production of *Hamlet* which was presented at Coloured high schools in the Cape Peninsula. Joko Scott, a black actor, played Hamlet. "I wanted to use a cast of black and white actors, which was quite unheard of at that time," said Phyllis Klotz. "And a black Hamlet - people found that very hard to accept. We found a context for the play: the action/inaction crux was quite good for the social context in South Africa at that stage because we had just come through a whole lot of [anti-apartheid] boycotts in 1980. People were thinking about whether to do or not and what to do."

The play was cut extensively with all the minor characters omitted. In keeping with theater-in-education ideals, the production was structured to stimulate discussion of the play's themes. Rose Korber described the performance: "The production got off to a riveting start when Hamlet turns to the audience, and is interrogated by two masked and cloaked figures who ply him with a barrage of statements and questions."

"We are here to sit in judgement on Prince Hamlet," says the one.

"Living in troubled times, man is forced to make decisions," adds the other. "Remember your own actions and their consequences, as well as your own inaction."

The rapid-fire questions are now put directly to the audience: "Is Hamlet to be judged by his actions or his inaction ? He always acts, yet when he does, he brings disaster into the lives of others. Do you agree? Hamlet is caught in the conflict between Christian values and traditional attitudes. What do you think he should have done ?"

The audience is asked to reflect on these questions, as they will later be called on to cast their verdict. And so, throughout the performance, the major scenes and soliloquies of Shakespeare's tragedy are interspersed with disturbing though-provoking questions addressed to both Hamlet and to the student audience, who, by this time, have begun to empathise completely with Hamlet's agonising dilemma. At play's end, it is now the students' turn to make their contributions. Three conflicting verdicts are proposed by the three actors, and the students are free to choose whichever protagonist they prefer.

The use of a black actor in the title role sets up interesting reverberations in the South African context. The most obvious parallel is the usurpation of black Hamlet's rights by the white Claudius, aided and abetted by his white advisers. Although Hamlet has the support of the people, he is outmatched in terms of power by the white king. He is betrayed by his white lover and his white friends. Although the emphasis on Christian versus traditional revenge morality may be seen as a dilution of the political thrust of the production, the focus on the action/inaction crux certainly placed the play firmly in the South African context.

The following year Phyllis Klotz again directed Hamlet, this time at the People's Space Theater in Cape Town. The theater, renamed after the original Space Theatre changed venues, was the center of multiracial, alternative, and experimental theater in Cape Town. In this production, the cast was all white, except for Ivan Lucas, a coloured actor, who played Polonius and Laertes. When I asked Ms Koltz what the implication of having these characters played by a Coloured actor would be, she replied diplomatically, "Nothing really - I don't think in those terms." She added, "The actor was a young, aggressive guy, so he brought that aggression, annoyance, and anger to the role of Laertes."

The production followed basically the same format as that of the previous year, although more text was included because the restrictions of fitting into school timetables no longer applied. The set was simple: black and white squares on the floor, a pile of armor and weapons in one corner, and a simple chair. The costumes were stylized, to give a sense of period. "The men wore big boots and black pants and white shirts," said Phyllis Klotz. "Gertrude had a lovely red dress laced at the back. These white and black and red figures moved like chess pieces on the checked floor."

Stephen Gurney, who played Hamlet, saw him "as Everyman but, unlike the average man, manifesting particular complexities - in coping with the battle between reason and passion, the mind and emotions." (Kairen Short, *Argus*, August 16, 1982). In an interview, he said, "There must be a resolution to this inner conflict. His emotions desire revenge, but reason dictates otherwise. Hamlet is positive and dynamic and he employs his keen perception and satirical sense of humour to manipulate the other members of the court and to delay his decision. It is only after his return from his voyage to England that he finds the balance between mind and emotion and, so centred, arrives at a state of relaxed anticipation. He says: 'The readiness us all.' He is prepared to face his destiny. Viewed intellectually, the play presents many an intellectual trap. But seen in its spiritual light, it is not a complicated work."

This production was clearly less political than the 1981 *Hamlet*. Not only was Hamlet white, but Gurney evidently saw the character in spiritual rather than political terms. For him the essence of the play was Hamlet's inner conflict and his movement towards spiritual resolution. Nevertheless, having a coloured actor playing both Polonius and Laertes provided the production with an interesting commentary on the position of the coloured community in South Africa. Ivan Lucas as Polonius sets up parallels with an older generation of coloureds, eager to be integrated into white society, willing to compromise with the Afrikaner regime, which on occasion generously refers to them as "brown Afrikaners." A Coloured Polonius could only have reminded audiences of those who took their places on the Coloured Representative Council, an advisory body with no real power, generally regarded as government stooges. A Colored Laertes, by contrast, sets up parallels with the younger generation of Coloureds, highly politicized, less ready to compromise, seeing themselves as part of the oppressed black majority rather than as a separate group. Laertes' co-option by the white Claudius could thus be seen as an example of the immense manipulative power at the disposal of the white authorities.

To conclude: Shakespeare productions in South Africa have been used by English-speaking whites to maintain the position of cultural superiority, by Afrikaners to challenge this position and to validate Afrikaner culture, and by Coloureds, Indians, and blacks to establish their bid for inclusion in the rights and privileges of an equal society. Recent multiracial productions have explored the complexities of South African society, and reflect an acceptance of its multiracial composition and a desire for change. Perhaps they offer us a premonition of South Africa in the coming time. As Hamlet himself tells us, "The readiness is all."

W. ROHAN QUINCE

REVIEWS

A Review of Periodical Articles (1987-88)

For a play whose action takes place largely in the mind, there is a fair amount of solid flesh around, even if much of it is horizontal by the end of the fifth act. "Tis bitter cold,/And I am sick at heart": physical sensation turning into inner feeling, or a balance being kept between the two ? This year's main articles either meditate on this relationship or tilt the balance decisively towards one side.

The most ambitious of these is John Hunt's[1] emphatic demonstration of the role of body in *Hamlet*. Listing the varied imagery of human corporeality, he concludes that "these images of body parts in *Hamlet* add up to a virtual anatomical catalogue (or, to use the Ghost's grim little joke about dismemberment, 'blazon') of the human form." The body is, of course, the medium of action, but, rather than simply providing the apparatus of Grand Guignol, Shakespeare is "methodically deconstructing the body." Psychological or spiritual notions are located in the physical, so that fragmentation is perceived as an ineluctable process of near-Swiftian intensity. From Horatio's offering of a piece of himself, through the Ghost's paradoxical embodiment of all that rots, to the pile of literal bodies, the play enforces the corruption of flesh to such a point that it drives Hamlet to a contempt for all experience which is tainted by corporeality. But, as is particularly stressed by his treatment of Ophelia, his violent attempts to rid himself of the body actually immerse him in his human physicality. Hamlet has to break out of his anguished effort to separate soul from body: in order to act, "human beings must accept the fact that their achievements go hand in hand with failure, and find their integrity in the welcoming of fragmentation." The Hamlet of the fifth act is one who has acknowledged the limitations of his kind.

As is perhaps inevitably the case at this stage of criticism, it is not a changed *Hamlet* which emerges from Hunt's highly perceptive and intense essay: we end up, indeed, with our old friend, the changed Hamlet. But his stress on a philosophical moment - Hamlet, we might unhistorically say, is forced to acknowledge the simultaneous truth and limitations of Cartesian dualism - and his approprately searing style seem right for the time. So too does his choice of a topic which can be made true to dramatic form. For, points out Susan Baker,[2] the illusion of a character's inward consciousness must, in drama, be embodied. Shakespeare, she suggests, inherits a morality play tradition where a central character is split into several aspects in order to demonstrate "the interplay of conflicting qualities and desires in an allegory of inwardness." For the writer of this review, "allegory" is an oddly anodyne term to apply to a play whose power lies essentially in empirical actuality (dramatically, linguistically); but Baker's application of the idea is far more interesting than its definition. The play presents for Hamlet one possible schema after another , each of which arouses in the audience an expectation which is displaced while Hamlet is off-stage. So Ophelia's madness actualizes Hamlet's mere antic disposition, and his pondered suicide is also reflected onto her. Hamlet's anger and intended reckless revenge are realized in the actions and words of Laertes. Theatrical interpretations sometimes appear to emerge from the woollier areas of trendy 'theatre studies,' but Baker's emphasis upon how the audience perceives intention and action is exactly honed to the rhythm and irony of the play's action: Hamlet's words are so often bodied forth by other characters.

These approaches grasp, hold the play more firmly than the kind of re-iteration of *Hamlet* as psychological *agon* presented by John Halverson.[3] Into a primitive world derived from the sources, where the story is a straightforward one of crime and revenge, Shakespeare puts doubts and uncertainties. Into a court basically provincial and unsophisticated, he places a hero who, as a student from Wittenberg, is thoughtful, intellectual. Hamlet's heroic stature is a result of his refusal to act as if he were a member of the primitive world around him. His inner conflict, the object of the play's psychological study, is between intellect and emotion, the latter spurring him to immediate revenge while the former restrains. Well, yes, but. . . . Halverson writes a thoughtful essay himself, but the raw edges of the text risk being smoothed away in a confirmation of Renaissance man as hero. As Richard Horwich's[4] essay on internal parody in Shakespeare's plays (which has a short section on *Hamlet*) suggests, the relationship between the worlds of the play is not neat and simple. When Hamlet parodies Osric's euphemistic style, or, more tellingly, when he parodies Laertes's hyperbolic expression of grief for Ophelia (5.1), he is showing how language presents irresolvable problems of sincerity. Does, one might ask, Hamlet's sophisticated ability to expose crudity of expression invalidate the feelings of the character being parodied? Or does it invalidate his own ? The worlds of the play are perhaps not neatly separated.

Lying behind all these arguments is the assumption that the text of *Hamlet* bodies forth its meaning. Of course, the singular has at once to be converted to a plural: there are meanings and there are texts. It is the contention of Paul Werstine's[5] article that the plurality of the one is a direct result of the plurality of the other. He examines critically the effects of the editorial convention of yoking together the early printed texts to form a text supposedly Shakespeare's. His example of the way in which two motives for Hamlet's apology to Laertes before the duel are retained in texts certainly proves one point. In F Hamlet tells Horatio that he is sorry for his treatment of Laertes before Osric enters (5.2.75-80); whereas in Q2 this passage does not appear, the motive instead coming from a Lord's report of Gertrude's wish that Hamlet "use some gentle entertainment to Laertes" (5.2.194-206). Modern texts thus double up the reasons for Hamlet's apology, while Q2 and F separately plot a more direct course. A reader of a modern text will thus find the play more mysterious than a reader of either of the early texts. However, solutions proffered by the currently fashionable revision school are equally invalid: an analysis of some conclusions in Philip Edward's New Cambridge edition seeks to show that revisionist assumptions (e.g. reducing passages to a single 'meaning' so that two such 'meanings' can be readily contrasted in the service of proving the superiority of one over the other) are no more proper than any other assumptions. The attempt to reconstruct a pure version from the accidental variability of texts is linked by Werstine to Michel Foucault's characterization of all searches for origins as futile. So the critical enigmas which have oiled the vast motor of Hamlet criticism may be the result of editorial tradition; but any alternative editorial procedure is methodologically unsound. Either way, we end up with a chimera: a hybrid monster or a purely fanciful conception.

Werstine's powerful article brings editorial practice into the post structuralist age, and it leaves the body of the text of *Hamlet* as fragmented as John Hunt's analysis of the body in the text leaves the play's language. It is a happy chance that, almost simultaneously, there appeared an ariticle by Barbara Everett[6] advocating a kind of sceptical *jouissance* in editorial procedures. Her list of seventeen suggested readings of textual cruxes is designed, as well as genuinely offering new explanations or emendations, to show how textual scholarship, far from being an objective science, betrays distinct critical judgements and preconceptions. Her first example is particularly appropriate in our present context. The idea that the celebrated "dram of eale" (1.4) is incoherent because the sentence is unfinished fits neatly into Philip Edwards's belief that the Folio text (which omits the passage) reflects Shakespeare's censorship of the parts of the play wth which he was dissatisfied. Or, in her second example, the general modern view that the 'pollax' which Hamlet senior smote (1.1) must be 'Polacks' or Poles is based on the assumption voiced most eloquently by Harold Jenkins when he says that the sledded Poles have a "power to stir the imagination, which a pole-axe so signally lacks." Unfortunately, Everett drily observes, the glamour of these Eastern Europeans has blinded us to the sheer absurdity of the old king interrupting a parley to smite "his sledge-seated peaceable companions." Imagination can blind reason. She then proposes that the "pollax" of Q2 and F is what it looks like - a pole-axe - and that the king in the parley smote his 'slatted' (in its obsolete form, 'sleated') i.e. 'shattered' pole-axe on the ice. The power of the phrase, but also its difficulty, arises from its use of prolepsis: the king smote and so shattered his pole-axe. Everett's suggestion gives both vitality and sense to the lines; and her suggestion that the "dram of eale" passage is perfectly coherent if we simply recognize that the nonsensical "of a doubt" as a misreading of a verb is refreshingly commonsense. Just a drop of oil ("ele" is an obsolete word) ruins a noble substance and its credit in the eyes of a viewer, as "anyone who has cleaned clothes" knows. Her candidate for the verb, 'overcloud,' is certainly imaginative; and her other readings, even of small matters, are equally acute and sensible. I particularly liked her - tentative - observation that Hamlet's too too sallied flesh (on the principle, properly Johnsonian, of seeking to explain before rushing to amend) might derive from the obsolete transitive verb, 'to sally', meaning 'to leap (a mare).' We thus produce a colloquial equivalent of the modern 'thoroughly buggered about.' Unlikely ? Perhaps, but the assumption that criticism should make a text fun seems more healthy than many others.

It also produces more interesting reading than, say, the assumption that texts can be explained by means of the structural pattern of *genre*. Such a method all too often consigns a play to the realms of the living dead. And this is said with all due deference to two examples among this year's articles, each of which is elegantly shaped but ultimately fails to inject life into the body of the text. George F. Held[7] aims to prove that Hamlet's actions and intentions fit the Aristotelian concept of tragedy being directed to a good end. Hamlet's purpose, established before he learns of his father's murder, is to show that true grief is the index of the quality of true love. His perception that his mother's present love for Claudius is mere lust leads him to the belief that this is all she has ever been capable of. Such a lack of moral fibre comes to be seen as endemic within degenerate humanity, so that Hamlet's commitment to the ideal that "Love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds" involves him in being ready to accept self-sacrifice. He is in a near-suicidal frame of mind from the outset, and his method of antagonizing Claudius exposes him to danger. In a compromised world, the purity of love expressed in the Player's speech about Hecuba contrasts with all around him. Hamlet's sense of needing to redeem the world makes his pattern shadow that of Christ, though not necessarily in any overt, allegorical way. Held argues that such a parallel indicates "Shakespeare's intuitive understanding of his hero," while also confirming the morally restorative nature of Aristotelian tragedy. It is difficult for such arguments to avoid some tautology, the play confirming the category it is chosen to represent. And when Hallett Smith[8] writes about the closeness of history to tragedy on the grounds that *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* share a "statement of tragic inevitability, the feeling of awe in the face of impending disaster which is the hallmark of true tragedy," the terms are similarly too easily self-approving. Smith's essay, his own contribution to a number of the *Huntington Library Quarterly* very properly dedicated to and celebrating his extensive and impressive work, is, I am happy to say, more interesting on the broader theme of how Shakespeare learns from his history experience when writing later tragedies. But the details relating to *Hamlet* (e.g. how 1.2 recalls omens foretelling Caesar's assassination) are not in themselves much more than confirmations of a pretty vague category.

That genres tend to be relative, their definitions reflecting broad social preconceptions, is noted in an essay by R.A. Foakes[9] in the same celebratory issue. He argues that, whereas *Hamlet* was seen as the central Shakespeare play during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that position has now been taken over by *King Lear*. *Hamlet* was popular because its depiction of a lonely, alienated figure embodied "the anxieties or sense of alienation felt by intellectuals." *Lear* now seems more relevant because Hamlet's protest against corruption has given way to a sense of the vast, uncontrolled hostility of a nuclear age. There is a lot of question-begging going on in any argument that one hundred and fifty years of popularity can be attributed to a single cause. The basic implication of Foakes's essay, that different ages perceive different values in plays supposedly of the same genre, is nevertheless valid, even if the argument so established has more radical conclusions than those he is concerned with in this particular article.

Essays by Hugh MacLean[10] and Charles Marowitz[11] take further the lines of approach of Smith and Foakes respectively. The relationship between the characters of Prince Hal and Hamlet has been one of the most popular aspects of studies of connections between Shakespearean history and tragedy. MacLean concedes that many analogies exist (each adopts a disguise to gain time etc.), but finds the differences more telling. Hal's journey is bound by historical circumstance: he lives through time in the sense of a historical continuum, his road being laid open to him. Hamlet, however, has to puzzle out his story through a quest to control events. Hence, after the early soliloquy in *I Henry IV*, there is no need for the dramatist to analyze a struggle, whereas Hamlet's is traced in many soliloquies, in the course of which dread of something after death, for example, can and does expand his sense of time and question his ability to shape his narrative. Only towards the end does he achieve true detachment, while Hal is "not truly detached so much as he is *attached to a kind of detachment* which, self-consciously cultivated with careful art, enables his steady advance towards the assumption of royal power." As my quotation suggests, the essay is not alone in its kind in being more interesting about Hal than about Hamlet (cf. Bert O. States in last year's review). Does this, I wonder, suggest anything about *Hamlet's* resistance to such comparative study ?

Foakes's concern with the relevance of a play to its present-day audience is given the vehemence of characteristically trenchant personal commitment in the printed version of a lecture delivered at Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft-West, Bochum in April 1987 by Charles Marowitz. The ever-controversial Marowitz aggressively justifies his own belief that being true to Shakespeare is not to pursue an embalming notion of fidelity, but to re-interpret vigorously Shakespeare's fables for the present day. "The overriding aesthetic question today is what permutations and what contemporary insights can be fashioned from the body of work bequeathed us through four hundred years of Shakespearean history." In the course of his lecture he explains that his own collage-version of *Hamlet*, the first of his Shakespearean experiments, emerged from his hatred of all that the character Hamlet stands for (i.e. the intellectualization and what Marowitz terms "loquacious moralizing" by which he excuses inaction - the Hamlet as defined in Foakes's study). Traditional views of *Hamlet* are effectively endorsements of liberal/reactionary ideas: "*Hamlet* has become the sacred cow of the Reactionaries," who approve of what Marowitz dislikes - Hamlet's "platitudes," sensitivity and reluctance to commit a violent act in response to "the greater violence already committed." Whereas in Foakes's scheme the plays remain the same, but ages change, in Marowitz's proposal the plays must be constantly revived by an individual director bringing to them the same intellectual energy, a committed radical creativity, that Shakespeare poured into them. The body of the text remains lifeless unless the director forcefully expresses a personal ideological commitment.

It is curious to note how such views (shared by many now - Michael Bogdanov would be an obvious example in a British context) run exactly counter to what is happening in the world of music. The dynamic within performances of European classical music (Hogwood's Mozart, Norrington's Beethoven and ensembles such as the Collegeum Aureum) is towards releasing the energy of works by returning, as far as is possible, to the conditions of original performances: performers immerse their identity in precise observation of Beethoven's metronome markings and operate through the limitations as well as the possibilities of authentic instruments. The account given by William Hutson[12] of two "authentic" stagings of *Hamlet* in 1900 and 1904 may explain why such historicism will not work for drama. Where Hogwood's Mozart is fresh and vital, William Poel's London performance of Q1 and George Pierce Baker's Harvard rednderking of F look to have been pretty supine affairs - or is one prejudiced by the useful photographs Hutson provides in which the smell of an old-fashioned museum wafts from the page ? Textually (e.g. the reinstatement of the entry of Fortinbras at the end) and theatrically (e.g. the use of three stage areas, inner above, inner below and the platform) the performances did good and interesting things; but how would, say, Poel's encouragement to the actors to engage in direct comments to the audience (and vice versa) have worked in practice ? Times change and, as Saburô Satô[13] shows in an article on how the figure of Ophelia was assimilated into Japanese culture, societies alter perceptions. Only seven years after a translation of "To be, or not to be" brought *Hamlet* into the Japanese consciousness, Satô reports, Ophelia was made into a Romantic figure of the "hapless beauty who dies of a broken heart as a pawn of fate" by the novelist Mori Ôgai in his translation, "Song of Ophelia," of 1889. This image was then adopted by other writers, such as Shimazaki Tôson who 'Japanized' her in three plays. If we, too, have subsumed *Hamlet* within our own cultural assumptions, why is it that the alternatives seem to be lifeless research or directorial arrogance ? Must the body of the text lie dead or be transformed into the mock-life of a marionette ?

Interpretative notes this year are interesting, if small-scale. Horst Breuer[14] suggests that the "late innovation" (2.2) which caused the players to leave their residential theatre and go on tour may be an internal reference, rather than one to contemporary events, such as children's companies or the Essex rising. The death of an old ruler and the accession of a new one have produced the innovation of the succession of a brother, a novelty which might well have led to unquiet and insecurity and thus the banning of plays. Gary V. Monitto[15] notes that the final scene contains references to "chance" (5.2.339), "mischance" (5.2.399) and "accidental judgments, casual slaughters" (5.2.387), so that Fortune could be seen as continuing to play a major role even after Hamlet's resigned frame of mind may seem to have transcended fate. Words depend on who is saying them and to whom, but the note reminds us to be wary of neat patterns tracing Hamlet's 'recovery'.

Textural and source notes are similarly miniature, if finely shaped. When the dying Hamlet tells Horatio to remain awhile "in this harsh world." suggests R. Viswanathan,[16] the word may carry the sense of harsh, clamorous sounds. Elsinore has been full of noises (drunken orgies, the loquacity of the court), whereas Hamlet, like Cordelia, has set great store by silence. It is now Horatio who must carry on the task of the still small voice of truth in a noisy world. One of the noises, the crowing of the cock, provokes Marcellus's account of the tradition of the all-night crowing on Christmas Eve. It has proved difficult to pin down references to the idea before Shakespeare, even though the tradition would appear to have been current. Andrew Breeze[17] notes two Welsh poems of the late fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries which mention the event, the B version of *Englynion y Misoedd* ('Stanzas of the Months') and lines by Huw Arwystli. I expect Shakespeare's Welsh was fairly small, but Breeze's point is that the tradition does seem to have been present in Britain, despite the lack of literary reference of the source kind. It looks like the kind of tradition which does not require a 'source'.

Sources are proposed by John W. Velz[18] and A.B. Taylor.[19] The former suggests that Ophelia's awkward pharaseology, "My lord, I have remembrances of yours / That I have longed long to redeliver" (3.1.93-4), may derive from Arthur Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* where Juliet longs long to hear the tongue-tied Romeo speak. Taylor argues that Shakespeare's use of the old-fashioned "fellies" (actually "Fallies" in F) in association with the idea of a "hill of heaven" (2.2. 491-2) in the Player's speech on the burning of Troy may recall Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses*. Golding uses 'fellies' (the outer rim of a wheel) in his account of Phaethon's ride ending in a conflagration. He also writes that the chariot has "much a doe to climbe against the Hyll." Pyrrhus's "eyes like carbuncles" (2.2. 459) may also derive from Golding's mistranslation of Ovid's description of the palace of the sun as inlaid with "flammasque imitante Pyropo" ('bronze imitating flames'). Golding renders: "Beset with sparckling Carbuncles that like to fire did shine."

Finally, Bernard Richards[20] locates the "distracted globe" (1.5.97) in which Hamlet vows to remember the Ghost within the context of references to the theatre in the play as a whole. Hamlet may mean to invoke a dominant Renaissance image of the theatre "as a place that could provide locations of items to be memorized in a mnemonic system' (cf. Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* and *Theatre of the World*). So Hamlet will not forget the Ghost because he is in a theatre which can easily serve as a medium for a memory system. The Globe, then, is a physical space for mental activity. And you can't have one without the other, which is where we came in . . . .

W. HUTCHINGS

NOTES

1. John Hunt, "A Thing of Nothing: The Catastrophic Body in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 no. 1 (Spring 1988), 27-44.

2. Susan Baker, "Hamlet's Bloody Thoughts and the Illusion of Inwardness," *Comparative Drama*, 21 no. 4 (Winter 1987-88), 303-17.

3. John Halverson, "*Hamlet:* Ethos and Transcendence," *Anglia* Band 106 Heft 1/2 (1988), 44-73.

4. Richard Horwich, "'I Sing But After You': Shakespeare's Internal Parody," *Studies in English Literature*, 28 no. 2 (Spring 1988), 219-40.

5. Paul Werstine, "The Textual Mystery of *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 no 1 (Spring 1988), 1-26.

6. Barbara Everett, "New Readings in *Hamlet* (and Some Principles of Emendation)," *Review of English Studies*, 39, no. 154 (May 1988), 177-98.

7. George F. Held, "Hamlet's Other Purpose," *Anglia*, Band 106 Heft 3/4 (1988), 315-37.

8. Hallett Smith, "Shakespeare's Path from History to Tragedy,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 50 no. 3 (Summer 1987), 179-98.

9. R.A. Foakes, "*King Lear* and the Displacement of *Hamlet*,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 50 no. 3 (Summer 1987), 263-78.

10. Hugh MacLean, "'Looking before and after': Hal and Hamlet Once More," *Papers on Language and Literature*, 23 no. 3 (Summer 1987), 273-89.

11. Charles Marowitz, "Shakespeare Recycled," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 no.4 (Winter 1987), 467-78.

12. William Hutson, "Elizabethan Stagings of *Hamlet:* George Pierce Baker and William Poel," *Theatre Research International*, 12 no. 3 (Autumn 1987), 253-60.

13. Saburô Satô, "The Japanization of Ophelia in Shimazaki Tôson's Plays," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 24 no. 3 (1987), 231-42.

14. Horst Breuer, "The 'Late Innovation' in *Hamlet*," *Notes and Queries*, 34 no. 2 (June 1987), 212-15.

15. Gary V. Monitto, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," *The Explicator*, 46 no. 2 (Winter 1988), 6.

16. R. Viswanathan, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," *The Explicator*, 46 no. 2 (Winter 1988), 6-8.

17. Andrew Breeze, "Welsh Poetry and the Crowing of the Cock in *Hamlet*," *Notes and Queries*, 34 no. 2 (June 1987), 212.

18. John W. Velz, "Ophelia's 'Longed Long'", *Notes and Queries*, 34 no. 2 (June 1987), 215.

19. A.B. Taylor, "The Fellies, Spokes, and Nave of Fortune's Wheel: A Debt to Arthur Golding in *Hamlet*," *English Language Notes*, 25 no. 1 (September 1987), 18-20.

20. Bernard Richards, "Hamlet and the Theatre of Memory," *Notes and Queries*, 35 no. 1 (March 1988), 53.

Hamlet. By William Shakespeare, Herausgegeben, ubersetzt und kommentiert von Holger M. Klein. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984.

There are two sides to every coin. What Samuel Johnson called "the prase of variety,"[1] presents a major problem to any editor of Shakespeare's plays, let alone a translator. On the one hand it is difficult to decide on the approriate text, on the other hand a translation cannot render the same variety or ambiguity as the original text, and will thus always be a somewhat inferior substitute.

This general problem becomes particularly obvious in the case of *Hamlet*. As Maurice Charney states in his analysis of the style in *Hamlet*, Hamlet's repliques are pregnant with significances beyond those of simple denotation."[2] How is one to convey this multiplicity in another language ? More difficult even, how is one to find equivalents for the wordplay and the puns, which are so essential to the play ? To quote Charney again, ". . . punning is a reflex, and once the possibility of pun is acknowledged, the English language has so many multiple meanings that it is difficult to avoid wordplay."[3]

Since wordplay can only be transported in very few cases, the options are to either translate the text literally - thus losing the effect of the wordplay in most cases - or to find an equivalent in the target language which has roughly the same effect but does not necessarily resemble the original. In the case of a "put for pun's sake," the latter alternative is feasible, but Hamlet's puns are far from being arbitrary. They represent his means of feigning madness whilst still uttering shrewd statements. As Wolfgang Clemen writes, "Hamlet's imagery, which thus calls things by their right names; acquires a peculiar freedom from his feigned madness. Hamlet needs images for his 'antic dispostion'. He would betray himself if he used open, direct language. Hence he must speak ambiguously and cloak his real meaning under quibbles and puns, images and parables."[4] If one in addition considers the following remark made by Friedrich Schlegel, incidentally the brother of the most famous translator of *Hamlet*, August Wilhelm Schlegel, "Nothing is strange, superfluous, or arbitrary in this masterpiece of artistic profoundness"[5] - any attempt at translating *Hamlet* becomes a Sysiphean task.

Holger M. Klein was aware of these problems when he edited and translated the play for the 1984 Reclam edition in two volumes. The first volume contains the English text, a collation of Q2, F1 and Q1 in most cases with occasional consultations of Q3, Q4, Q1676, and F2. It also holds the German translation. Klein gives variants from the different editions of the English text for those who want to compare single words or expressions. Unfortunately these variants are only listed at the end of the first volume rather than in the manner of the Arden Shakespeare, in which the variants are listed at the bottom of the according page, which presents an excellent help to the reader. The same applies to the commentary, which is contained in the second volume and is followed by a useful bibliography.

Contrary to the classical style of A.W. Schlegel or the poetic rhythm of the contemporary German poet Erich Fried, Klein offers a literal translation. Theodor von Zeynek, who translated the play in 1952, remarked in his preface that such an endeavour was "doomed to fail."[6] Klein's aims are different from those of the other translators, though. His word-for-word translation and his elaborate commentary supply the reader with the exact meaning the words and expressions possessed in Shakespeare's time. In the German text he opts for a "mitigated modernism," thus offering the present-day reader easier access to Shakespeare's intricate language; in the commentary he differentiates between nuances in meaning. Klein's *Hamlet* is not meant for the stage; it lacks Shakespeare's poetic diction as well as the rhythm and musicality of the original play.

The main difference between the established translations and Klein's version can best be illustrated by taking Hamlet's first lines during his encounter with Claudius as an example. When the new king welcomes Hamlet, his short aside is "A little more than kin and less than kind" (1.2. 65). Schlegel found an apt equivalent for this remark in "Mehr als befreundet, weniger als Freund," maintaining the metre and punning on one word ("Freund") through employing the prefix and a different suffix. Klein's translation ("Etwas mehr als verwandt und weniger als naturgegeben freundlich") loses the rhythm as well as the pun. This line is accompanied by a whole page of commentary, providing etymological explanations, linking the sentence to a proverb, analyzing the ambiguity of both adjectives, and suggesting an interpretation of how Hamlet's first words characterize his attitude towards Claudius. This leads to a highly theoretical appreciation of the implications Hamlet's aside offers.

There are cases in which Klein's translation makes ambiguous sentences one-dimensional. Such an instance can be found in 5.2.3, where Horatio's reply to Hamlet's question "You do remember all the circumstance ?" - "Remember it, my lord !" can be regarded as the equivalent of both "How could I forget it ?" and "How could you ask me such a question ?"[7] In Klein's translation ("Und ob ich mich daran erinnere, mein Prinz !") Horatio clearly makes the former statement, and there is no mention of any alternative meaning in the commentary. Here, both Schlegel's "Erinnern, gnäd'ger Herr ! and Zeynek's "Erinnern ? Prinz !" are closer to the original and still maintain the inherent ambiguity.

Often there are fortunate analogies between English and German, as becomes evident in the dialogue on the "commonness" of death between

Hamlet and Gertrude (1.2.72ff). Gertrude uses "common" in the sense of "general fate," whereas Hamlet implies "base, vulgar." Since the German word "gemein" equally bears these two meanings, Hamlet's reactions to Gertrude's soothing words can be conveyed in a satisfactory way.

Klein's *Hamlet*, then, is not yet another version in a long line of attempts to capture the literary English text in translation. It is a basis of study for those German scholars whose imperfect command of the English language stands in the way of their critical appreciation of Shakespeare's original work. For them, the Reclam eidtion will facilitate a close analysis of the original *Hamlet*.

HERBERT MAINUSCH

NOTES

1. *The Complete Works Of Samuel Johnson* vol VIII. The Yale Edition of the works of S. Johnson. Arthur Sherbo (ed.) New Haven and London 1968. p. 1011.

2. Maurice Charney, *Style in Hamlet*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p.289.

3. Ibid

4. Wolfgang Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*. Londen 1951. p. 110.

5. "Nichts ist fremd, überflüssig oder zufällig in diesem Meisterstück künstlerischen Tiefsinns." Friedrich Schlegel, "Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie", in: *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5, Wien 1796. p. 65.

6. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prinz von Danemark*. In die deutsche Sprache ubertragen von Theodor von Zeynek. Klassiker der Buhne. Verlagsgemeinschaft "Stifterbibliothek". Munchen/ Salzburg 1952. p. 8.

7. cf. Charney, p. 309.

***Shakespeare's Analogical Scene: Parody as Structural Syntax.* By Joan Hartwig. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985, pp. 231.**

The starting point of Joan Hartwig's *Shakespeare's Analogical Scene* is that modern Shakespearean producers and readers often omit what they see as essentially non-functional scenes with minor characters who contribute little to the drama apart from comic relief or a change of mood. On the contrary, Joan Hartwig argues, such scenes and characters have a "deeply significant analogical connection" (p.3) with the main action.

The use of analogical scenic structures is not, of course, unique to Shakespeare, though he employs more effectively perhaps than other Renaissance and Elizahethan dramatists what was a dramaturgical commonplace. Hartwig's use of the term analogy (which means "correspondence"), like Francis Fergusson's before her, attempts "to define dramatic context through its interacting parts," to see the way in which "particular scenes are related to others . . . not only by verbal and thematic connections but also through staging" (p. 4), and focusses on those characters - Cinna the poet in *Julius Caesar*, Elbow in *Measure for Measure*, the Apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet* - and scenes - the Porter scene, the scene between Macbeth and the murderers and Malcolm and Macduff - which have often puzzled audiences.

Hartwig's study concentrates on the function of parody which she differentiates from other kinds of analogy and which she defines in its widest sense: "Parody's distinct power is to reduce the imitated scene, action, speech, or gesture to simplistic terms before it causes the viewer to reconsider the original in a clearer though more complex way" (p. 6). And she draws attention to the fact that while "ridicule or reduction . . . is often a mark of parody" (p. 7), parody is not always comic as is made clear by the scene between Macbeth and the murderers, for instance.

Further, she draws a parallel between the parodic scene and the emblematic scene both of which "simplify in order to expose complexities" (p. 10), and cites as an example of both the Gravediggers' scene in *Hamlet*. The discussion centres on the Gravedigger's lines on the deliberateness of Ophelia's death, on the question of "will" in Ophelia's drowning, and on what constitutes an "act." And this is related to Hamlet's perception throughout the play that an act, to use the Gravedigger's words, "hath three branches - it is to act, to do, and to perform." Hamlet knows that "acting" and "performing" are not "doing," and through the Gravedigger's "comic equation" we are made to understand the "meaningful differentiation" between the three. Moreover, later in the scene, we have Hamlet's reflections on death and mortality set against the Gravediggers' nonchalant attitude towards death, and we become aware of death as "simultaneously awe-inspiring and ridiculous" (pp.11-12), a point made somewhat differently by Susan Snyder in *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies.*

In the chapter on *Hamlet*, "*Hamlet* and Parodic Polonius," Hartwig analyses Polonius' role in the play: "Polonius seems to draw into himself the larger terms of the play and through his literalizing and reductive effects creates a lens that enlarges the audience's vision of Hamlet" (p. 154) He is, to begin with, a parody of less foolish characters in the play. (It is interesting to recall here Linda Boose's article, "The Fashionable Poloniuses," *Hamlet Studies*. October 1979, which suggests that others in the play are parodies of Polonius !) There are analogues between Polonius and Claudius as fathers. Polonius exercises the parental control over Laertes (although he accedes to his son's desire to return to France) that Claudius wishes to exercise but fails to exercise over Hamlet. There are analogues also between Polonius and the Ghost as fathers; he imposes commands on his children and the Ghost imposes commands on his son. And just as Polonius cannot control "the consequences of the action he commanded Ophelia to take" (p. 157), so also the Ghost cannot control the consequences of the action he has commanded Hamlet to perform. Further, since the parodic scene between Polonius and Ophelia precedes the serious scene between the Ghost and Hamlet, it is not in the nature of digression but "presents central concerns through another perspective and suggests, in advance, limitations that might not otherwise be apparent" (p. 157)

Finally, there are parallels between Polonius and Hamlet. (This reviewer, in an article, "Hamlet and Polonius, "*Hamlet Studies*, Summer 1980, saw Polonius as a parody of Hamlet; Hamlet's loathing of Polonius as a projection of his self-loathing, and his killing of Polonius as a kind of self-purgation.) Hamlet, like Polonius and Claudius, but for different reasons, works through "indirections." In his search for proof that Claudius is his father's murderer he approximates Polonius in his search for proof that Hamlet's madness is due to his love for Ophelia, and both Hamlet and Polonius "suffer dehumanization from their single-minded search for proof" (pp. 160-61). However, when Polonius turns "literary critic" and drama critic, he and Hamlet do not approximate each other; rather "Polonius' parodic parallelism furnishes dramatic resonance for Hamlet's discourse on theatrical good taste" (p. 162).

Hatrwig makes a good point when she suggests that the badinage between Hamlet and Polonius just before *The Murder of Gonzago* is staged "pulls in another frame of reference, one that is highlighted in Horatio's speech in the opening scene." The two references to Julius Caesar connect through "parodic echo the ominous atmosphere following the elder Hamlet's death and the subsequent accidental murder of Polonius" (p. 163). She also makes a perceptive comment on Hamlet's motivation when she says that he spares Claudius at prayer but strikes the person behind the arras because if it were Claudius it "would fulfil in exact terms Hamlet's wish to kill Claudius while he is 'about some act/That has no relish to [sic] salvation in 't' " (p. 168).

Of the murder itself and Hamlet's easy acceptance of it, Hartwig observes: "He had not meant to kill Polonius, but now that he has, the fact itself is irrelevant. Polonius in death becomes a parody of what Claudius the man would be as Hamlet's victim (p. 165). Since Claudius is not just a man his killing involves much more that the killing of Polonius, and Hartwig sees Hamlet's games with Polonius' body and his exchange with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as touching on the concept of the "King's two bodies," the body natural and the body politic: "The body is with the king' recognises that Claudius' natural body is the King's, no matter how that kingship was acquired; 'but the king is not with the body' acknowledges Claudius's metaphysical violation of the relationship between the rightful king and his body politic" (p. 166). This short scene and the subsequent scene with Claudius where Hamlet indulges his black humour to the full anticipate also the Gravediggers' remarks on death.

Thus Hamlet's murder of Polonius clarifies several philosophical questions and is a "crucial axis" on which the play moves. When the situations of Hamlet, Laertes and Ophelia become parallel, "we are able to see clearly the difference between Hamlet, the complex, tentative perceptor of ambiguous situations, and those characters who fail to comprehend at his level . . . we have another way to view the complexity of Hamlet" (p. 169).

Joan Hartiwig's concrete discussions are far more valuable than her attempt to define parody and parodic scenes as a specific entity, clearly distinguishable within the general category of analogy or analogical scenes as well as from such other species as emblematic and "mirror" scenes. "Distinctions within the vocabulary of comedy," she says, "are difficult because categories tend to overlap and sometimes even to merge; therefore . . . it is important to define the ways in which parody resembles and yet distinguishes itself from other kinds of analogy" (p. 8). She has not been able to solve these difficulties, and where others before her have expressed puzzlement and despair she has not succeeded any better or achieved greater clarity or vigour of demarcation. In her examination of parodic scenes and characters, however, she provides several fresh insights and perceptions which make her book a welcome addition to Shakespeare studies.

MYTHILI KAUL

Last Things in Shakespeare. By Harry Morris. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1985. pp. xii+348. $30.

This handsomely printed and illustrated book deals first with a chapter on eschatology in *Hamlet*, which Morris, somewhat following G. Wilson Knight, finds imbued with *memento-mori* imagery. The title reveals his theological focus: "*Hamlet:* and Is It Not to be Damned ?" His thesis is that the four major tragedies all deal with the possibilities of damnation: *Hamlet* with the good man who will eventually resist damnation, *Othello* with the good man who will go to the devil, *King Lear* with the bad man who will apparently be saved at the end, and finally *Macbeth* with the bad man who will not be. This somewhat simplistic view lends itself nicely to a homiletic approach. The book has much that is good, new, and stimulating in it; but it also tends to be glib and to over-simplify grossly certain religious issues. The reason apparently is that the author is more concerned ultimately with rhetoric than with the subtleties of Shakespeare's complex characterization. One wonders, at the end, whether this book is not somewhat pretentious and does not duplicate what so many Christianizers have said before. It has to be read very cautiously.

For example, Morris dutifully lists some earlier scholars who have found the ghost in *Hamlet* to be a "goblin damn'd": however, among these he puts Sister Miriam Joseph, whose well-known *PMLA* article he entitles "Discussing the Ghost in *Hamlet*" (instead of "Discerning"). If the title alone were at stake, the *erratum* could be attributed to a minor clerical error, but when the slip is related to her scholarship, the mistake is substantive. Not surprisingly, he does not cite her additional articles on the subject, notably in *Studies in Philology*. Nor does he cite Christopher Devlin, whose *Hamlet's Divinity* represents an endorsement of the purgatorial view also. This latter omission especially may account for his flat assertion that "surprisingly little that is good can be perceived in the ghost" (p. 33); Devlin has observed, for instance, that the Ghost's command to leave Gertrude to heaven and his possible plea for prayers in "Remember me !" point to a pious nature. But, of course, most noticeable of all is Morris's complete omission of Devlin's thesis that the word revenge as used by a professedly purgatorial spirit could mean "purge" or "purify." The point has been raised that if the ghost meant Hamlet to help purge him of his sins and used "revenge" in that sense (one that the Prince then understandably misunderstood), why would it ask him to leave his mother alone ? Evidently Devlin would have said that some justice must be done (albeit the spirit never sanctions violence per se), but not directly apropos of Gertrude, who may have known nothing of the murder.

It is clear that Morris sides with Protestantism and will not tolerate a Catholic approach to this tragedy. This narrowness is seen in his belittling Hankins and Coursen, among others. Coursen, for example, is, in effect, damned for dismissing Eleanor Prosser's *Hamlet and Revenge* in a footnote (though Battenhouse is let off). Morris does cite Coursen's own somewhat glib statement "it is Hamlet's problem - not the critics' - to determine the nature of the ghost" (which, to my mind, begs the question), but in general he cannot understand how any critic could take the ghost at its word that it comes from purgatory. Yet a great many *Hamlet* scholars take this position, as he must know. Most recently, E. A. J. Honigmann, in his *Shakespeare: The "Lost Years,"* has written that Shakespeare "relapsed into a Catholic view of purgatory in the ghost's statement that it is doomed 'for a certain term' to fast in fires," concluding that it may be "easier to imagine that a former Catholic might slip into this way of thinking than that a Protestant writer who had never been a Catholic would do so" (p. 123).

Morris's credentials are good, and he has published himself in good places (such as *PMLA*), and it may seem ungracious to be very critical of him. But, to my mind at least, some of his sheer rhetoric does nto convince. What does it mean to say "In *Hamlet* evil saturates all, and by *all* we mean the universe" ? Does he imply that Shakepeare is embracing Luther's notion that all of Nature is tainted with Original Sin ? Apparently not, because he next tells us that he has in mind *universe* only in a metaphorical sense; he prefers to speak of "the universe of the play" rather than, say, "the world of the play" (a somewhat pretentious variation). He does admit that "the identification of the ghost itself - its nature and origins - has created one of the thorniest problems that face readers and interpreters of the play" (p. 17). How then does he solve it ? His response is the calm assertion that "Heaven's goal and hell's may be identical" (p. 33). That is taking the commonplace that everything that happens is ultimately God's will a bit too far. It seems odd that, in citing reference to *Julius Caesar* (or at least an earlier play about Caesar) in *Hamlet* (p. 34), he fails to consider how one ghost may have evolved from the other. His major point that simply fails to convince is his espousal, with Battenhouse, that the ghost is "probably the spitit of dead King Hamlet," who is "damned for his seeming only flaw of gluttony" ! (p. 71) Would that not damn Sir John as well ?

Other glib remarks can be likewise challenged. For instance he insists that "Polonius is always wrong" (p. 72). Always ? It so happens that I studied under the late Elkin Calhoun Wilson at New York University, whose *Shakespeare Quarterly* article "Polonius in the Round" I found a fitting rehabilitation, in part, of the old counsellor. In announcing that Polonius "is at least the brother of if not the model for Prufrock" (p. 72), Morris apparently has not checked into my own work disputing this (*American Notes and Queries*, XI, 56-57; *Research Studies* [Washington State Univ.], XLIII, 262-63; ibid., XLIV, 121-25).

It would not be fair to assess Morris's book without looking somewhat at the other chapters. As his title on the Venetian Moor indicates ("*Othello:* No Amount of Prayer Can Possibly Matter"), he agrees with Paul Siegel and a few others that the black hero goes to hell at the end. In asserting that "the Elizabethan demon was black, not the red of modern color-cartoonists" (p. 90), he goes a bit too far by imposing medieval standards upon Shakespeare's Renaissance picture; after all, the Sonnets are noted particularly for the innovative conception of blackness as beautiful, and in the tragedy darkness is linked by the villain with evil. In turn, he probably goes overboard in linking Iago with deviltry as such: "Iago, who is a devil himself, speaks not in metaphor when he comments on his own demonic nature" (p. 31). After all, Iago was probably named after the leading Spanish saint (after whom the city of Santiago was also named) ! If, as Morris says, "Desdemona is made to seem bad only insofar as she has deceived her father," what about her "indiscretions" ? Is her standing up for Cassio so soon after her marriage not in bad form?

Regarding *King Lear*, Morris is unhappy about Cordelia being *the* Christ figure - but not because he does not see her as one; he simply prefers to see Edgar as one too. His associating Cordelia's death by hanging to the tradition of depicting Christ as having been hanged (the Cross being His tree) is interesting, but then could not the same be said of the Fool (St. Paul having established the Fool-in-Christ metaphor) ? Macbeth, of course, he finds more damned than the rest (the comparative form of the verb here is perfectly allowable given his propensity to compare Dante's *Inferno*). But then Romeo and Juliet, even though they take their own lives (seemingly giving in to the unforgivable sin of despair), are saved. To be consistent, he might have noted that Dante put his most famous fornicators, Paolo and Francesca, in hell (though not very deeply). Are they not less sinful than the Veronese lovers ?

It is pleasant to end on a happeir note. In dealing with Falstaff, Morris surprised me by associating the same passage from Scripture to the fat rascal's death that I have: namely "all fleshe is grasse" (which he also finds in the Book of Common Prayer). Though he does not link this passage to the "Table of greene fields" crux, as I have (*AN&Q*, XII, 8-9), his appropriation of it to gloss Falstaff's "I am wither'd like an old apple-john" is an apt example of *memento mori*. Otherwise, however, Morris allows his Christianizing tendencies to get out of hand by finding Falstaff's (and Hal's) transgressions as Jew-like. Taking literally Sir John's somewhat disparaging comment "or I am a Jew else, an Ebrew Jew," he concludes that "by his own oath, the ancient ruffian has turned Jew. Hal, who has joined in these lines for the time being . . . becomes momentarily a Jew also" (p. 269). Such bigotry was not Shakespeare's style. Would not Morris have done better if he had also read and documented R.W. Desai's yeoman's work on Falstaff (*Sir John Falstaff, Knight,* Fennimore, Wis.: Westburg Associates, 1974) ?

R. F. FLEISSNER

Essays on Shakespeare. By William Empson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. £ 25 hardback; £ 7.95 paperback

This posthumous collection of essays will not add greatly to William Empson's reputation as a distinguished critic. He was preparing a gathering of five old and two new papers when he died in 1984, and these have been assembled and edited with devotion by David Pirie. They all have that personal, engaging, if at times over-casual manner that makes Empson's writing so individual. They are written, that is to say, in his quirky, direct style by a man who seems to be thinking aloud about subjects that really interest him. On the positive side, then, the essays have some of the qualities that contributed to Empson's deserved fame as a critic in his writings on ambiguity, on pastoral, and on complex words. In this book, however, he is involved to a large extent in arguing points with Dover Wilson, J.M. Robertson, and a variety of other scholars and critics whose work has been, at least in part, superseded.

In the long section on *Hamlet* that forms the centerpiece of the book Empson assumes that Shakespeare's central task was "that of making the old play seem real by making the hero life-like" (p. 87). He speculates a good deal about what Shakespeare took over from the old play of *Hamlet*, and even reconstructs some of the action of that lost text. There is no need to take this too seriously, but Empson's effort to look behind the late versions of Shakespeare's play that we have (the 1604/5 Quarto and the 1623 Folio), and to imagine what the play was like in 1601, lead him to argue that Shakespeare revised the play. In so claiming, Empson was ahead of his time, but unfortunately he argues from personal impressions and preferences about matters which turn on an interpretation of scholarly evidence, and he has no clear sense of the relation between the various texts of the play. So there is a lot of waste in the pages of this essay, and of the book as a whole.

At the same time, there are rewarding passages that show again Empson's flair for revealing a new perspective, and jolting his reader into serious reconsideration of a text. He is at his best in observing that Hamlet is more concerned with his "style of behaviour" than with the murder of Polonius: "To worry about one's style of behaviour rather than one's incidental murders now appears madly egotistical, but it would then appear as immensely princely behaviour. It seems clear that Shakespeare made Hamlet a model of princely behaviour as a primary element in his revivification of the old play" (p. 100). This reading explains Hamlet's egotism, or, to put it another way, his concern with self-presentation. It also helps to account for his "shocking" treatment of Ophelia and his mother. Empson's Hamlet is both disturbing and disturbed, the central figure in a "basic legend" that is a "dream glorification of both having your cake and eating it, keeping your secret for years, till you kill, and yet perpetually enjoying boasts about it" (p. 90).

The other essays in the volume vary in length and quality. The account of the narrative poems is little more than a useful survey. The essay on *Macbeth* takes issue with Dover Wilson about the extent to which the play as we have it has been cut. Empson is on the right track in this, as he is in his exposure of the absurdities Derek Traversi falls into in "hunting the symbol" in Shakespeare's late plays. The short piece on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reviews the New Arden edition by Harold Brooks, and includes speculation that Puck flew, or swung on a long rope, in the earliest performances of the play. The best essay, apart from the one on *Hamlet,* concerns the relationship of Hal and Falstaff, and the way in which the "inherent tension between the characters is given its fullest expression and then left unresolved" (p. 69).

In the last piece in the volume Empson wrote, "It seems to me that old men often get sillier and sillier" (p. 235). He was thinking of the old men in Shakespeare's late plays, but it is a remark that might have given him pause, and led to some self-questioning. He would have done well to recognise that the long, 64-page paper on the Globe Theatre which he wrote specially for the book was a rather meaningless exercise. Arguing a critical issue against Dover Wilson or Tillyard may still have value, but a consideration of the Globe has to be based on scholarly evidence. Although he skirmishes with Glynne Wickham's *Early English Stages*, and has some lively points to make about scaling walls on stage, Empson's assumptions about the Globe are based on the book by John Cranford Adams, which is now discredited, and on the long-abandoned notion that the theatre was octagonal. The editor would have done a service to Empson and the volume if he had decided to omit this essay altogether.

R. A. FOAKES

The Elizabethan Hamlet. By Arthur McGee. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987. Pp. 205. Index. No price indicated.

This is a strange book, a fanatical anti-Catholic tirade masquerading as literary criticism. As the blurb on the jacket informs us, the author "draws a picture of a Devil-controlled Hamlet in the damnable Catholic court of Elsinore," and "shows that the evil natures of the Ghost and of Hamlet himself were understood and accepted by the Protestant audiences of the day." An impressive array of evidence - theological, historical, sociological and literary - is adduced in support of this allegedly "original and provocative reinterpretation," blithely ignoring the monumental work of Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, Ist ed. 1967, 2nd ed. 1971). While one must respect the dedication of those scholars who try to revitalize the chimerical Elizabethan audience for us, it is difficult not to feel, echoing Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "The best in this kind are but shadows."

There is an important critical principle involved here: the relationship between the contemporary background material and the literary text. Is the latter, in this case *Hamlet*, only the sum of its parts or is it an imaginative re-creation in the Coleridgean sense, which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates" its constituent elements ? To this reviewer it seems self evident that the supremacy of *Hamlet*, and of our reactions to it as a play, must not be surrendered to the non-literary theories formulated by critics like Mcgee on the basis of their painstaking researches. How many of us would agre with him when he says that, at the end of the first scene, he finds it "hard to believe that anyone in Shakespeare's first audience would have regarded the Ghost as other than satanic" ? (p. 54) In the theatre we see him as he is described by Marcellus and Bernardo, "like the King . . . so majestical."

The use of so-called historical evidence seems to be as arbitrary as the use of statistics in modern society; you decide what you wish to prove and process the data accordingly. Most of us have been reasonably convinced by Dover Wilson's theory that, since Hamlet and Horatio are fellow students at Wittenberg, Luther's university, we are meant to think of them as Protestants. But Mr. Mcgee will not have it so; he would rather link the university with Marlowe's Faustus who, according to him "is, if anything, a schismatic Catholic who uses holy water in his conjuration of Mephistopheles" (p. 56). The famous university thus becomes the "dubious university" so that Hamlet and Horatio should cease to be enlightened Protestants, and be damned as renegade Catholics ! Inevitably, the friendship between these two characters also becomes tainted; Horatio whom Hamlet wears in his "heart's core" is no more than a sycophant, his "love is tainted with ambition and he may have been played with homosexual overtones for good measure - homosexuality having been linked with Catholicism and with Italy in particular" (p. 175). Mr. Mcgee out-Puritans Malvolio in his comments on the behaviour of Gertrude during the fencing match at the end of Hamlet. Apparently in all seriousness, he paints the following picture of a "tipsy" woman:

> She is Claudius's partner in incest, and his drinking companion too, for when Claudius does place the poison in the cup meant for Hamlet, Gertrude 'carouses' to Hamlet. In modern terms this is the equivalent of saying 'bottoms up' and if she has already drunk greedily her action is that of a seasoned toper and fits in with the dissolute image we are surely meant to have of her" (p. 171).

She, Laertes and Hamlet have Hell as their common destination; the exchange of forgiveness between the two men, and the last-minute illumination of Gertrude's mind regarding her son's references to the killing of a king - "O my dear Hamlet" - have no redemptive significance in the eyes of this critic; he even ignores Horatio's moving farewell: "Good night, sweet prince,/ And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest !" because, according to him, it would not have aroused much sympathy from an Elizabethan audience.

It is the ghost of this audience which haunts this book, interfering with some of the positive critical insights, for example, regarding the behaviour of Hamlet and Gertrude in the Bedroom Scene. Mr. Mcgee is tempted to agree with a sane critic like Bradley that Hamlet's desire is to save his mother's soul, but he is lured away by the spectre of the Elizabethan groundlings who would have identified Hamlet with the medieval Vice, whose traditional cap he must wear. (pp. 136-7). This fits in with the theory that "Hamlet plays Vice to the Ghost's Devil" (p. 178), and the transformation of a great tragedy into a commonplace anti-Catholic homily is complete. It is difficult to understand why this critic should have laboured so hard to destroy a play which has been popular for centuries.

URMILLA KHANNA

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